

ABSTRACT

Humans on Display: Searching for Purpose among Museum Exhibits Featuring Live Humans

Katherine Elizabeth Swenson, M.A.

Mentor: Julie L. Holcomb, Ph.D.

The purpose of this study is to explore why modern exhibits featuring live humans on display are so popular and what societal behavior patterns it reveals for the twenty-first century. The research for this assessment was extremely diverse, pulling together news articles, online videos, blogs, and comments on social media sites in hopes of providing a well-rounded analysis of the public response to these exhibits. Additionally, the study assesses how this research can be used by museums for integrating visitor needs with institutional needs. The analysis argues that modern examples of humans on display at educational institutions lack an identifiable purpose, at least to the public eye.

Humans on Display: Searching for Purpose among Museum Exhibits
Featuring Live Humans

by

Katherine Elizabeth Swenson, B.A.

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Approved by the Department of American Studies

Douglas R. Ferdon, Ph.D., Chairperson

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Approved by the Thesis Committee

Julie L. Holcomb, Ph.D., Chairperson

Douglas R. Ferdon, Jr., Ph.D.

J. Lenore Wright, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School

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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In an edition of the *Chicago Sunday Herald* on September 17, 1893, a cartoon depicts a dark-skinned woman pouring dishwater out of a bucket. Behind her lies a crowd of figures, all presumably white, with white clothing, and an awe-stricken look on their faces as they gaze in disbelief at the sight of the woman performing the perceptibly mundane task. The caption below the cartoon reads “GREAT EXCITEMENT—INDIAN LADY THROWING OUT DISHWATER.”¹ As the cartoonist hinted, there is a certain irony that visitors found such an attraction to the idea of humans on display, particularly when the subjects were merely performing the same monotonous tasks that Americans completed in their own homes every day. And yet society has shown interest in humans on display for centuries.

It is difficult to determine just how far back intercultural displays could be traced. As early as the sixteenth century French and English courts had both exhibited Native American tribes for amusement. This fueled multiple occasions of placing live humans from foreign cultures on display by the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as well.

¹ The cartoon described was found in Curtis Hinsley, “The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World’s Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893,” in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Eds. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991), 360.

One of the first known cases of humans becoming exhibits in the United States occurred in the Northeast with the display of a blind, almost completely paralyzed woman named Joice Heth. A poster advertising her display in December 1835 read, "Joice Heth is unquestionably the most astonishing and interesting curiosity in the world! She was the slave of Augustine Washington, (the father of Gen. Washington)."² Showman P.T. Barnum placed Heth on display until her death, although eventually a public autopsy revealed it to be a hoax based on her age.³ Despite the discovery P.T. Barnum continued to infuse the display of human "curiosities" into shows and exhibitions in New York City at Barnum's American Museum.

Other significant instances of human exhibits in the United States occurred at the first American Exposition in New York in 1853. Near the edge of the fairgrounds was an area known as Shantyville, which featured cultural oddities such as the Wild Man of Borneo, Fijian man-eaters, and hundreds of Indians from different tribes on display for public amusement.⁴ These attractions became so popular that by the early 1900s men such as Barnum recruited anthropologists to travel and bring back tribesmen from exotic locations specifically for exhibition purposes.

None of these occurrences of humans as exhibits attracted as much press as the display of an African pygmy named Ota Benga. In some ways his story began

² "Joice Heth Poster, 1835," Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, <http://chnm.gmu.edu/lostmuseum/lm/100/> (accessed November 20, 2012).

³ Benjamin Reiss, "P.T. Barnum, Joice Heth, and Antebellum Spectacles of Race," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (March 1999), 78.

⁴ Hinsley, 345.

when scientist W.J. McGee hired a businessman named Samuel Phillips Verner to recruit African pygmies for display in St. Louis so that they could demonstrate what he saw as stages of human evolution to an audience.⁵ While on display with a group of Batwa natives at the World's Fair, the pygmy named Ota Benga endured constant staring, ridicule, and even violence from the public. "Ota and the Batwa saw most of the parrots they had brought with them and all their pet monkeys succumb to 'lighted cigars and other vicious gifts forced on them by too-attentive visitors,'" historians Phillips Verner Bradford and Harvey Blume explain, illustrating the public response.⁶

At the close of the exposition Ota Benga stayed and worked in the American Museum of Natural History until 1906. Then he was moved to the Bronx Zoo, which placed Benga on display in the monkey house and placed a sign reading: "The African Pigmy, 'Ota Benga.' Age, 23 years. Height, 4 feet 11 inches. Weight, 103 pounds. Brought from the Kasai River, Congo Free State, South Central Africa, by Dr. Samuel P. Verner. Ex-hibited each afternoon during September."⁷ It was not until this display was created that significant negative public response emerged.

⁵ Phillips Verner Bradford and Harvey Blume, *Ota: The Pygmy in the Zoo*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 94.

⁶ Bradford and Blume, 118.

⁷ "Man and Monkey Show Disapproved by Clergy," *The New York Times*, September 10, 1906.

Public Response to Ota Benga's Display

Perhaps none did more to ignite the spark than Reverend R. S. MacArthur. Along with a number of clergymen representing the Colored Baptist Ministers' Conference, the reverend called attention to the disgraceful mistreatment of Benga during this time. "The person responsible for this exhibition degrades himself as much as he does the African," MacArthur stated in 1906, and then later identified an irony that "we send our missionaries to Africa to Christianize the people, and then we bring one here to brutalize him."⁸ Ota Benga quickly became a public display in more ways than one.

News of the pygmy on exhibition spread like wildfire and the newspapers became a prominent outlet for public opinion on the scandal. In a letter to the editor of the *New York Globe*, for instance, one writer commented, "I think it a shame that the authorities of this great city should allow such a sight as that witnessed at the Bronx Park – a negro boy on exhibition in a monkey cage."⁹ With a similar tone of outrage, a headline in the *New York Journal* about the exhibition from September 17, 1906 read, "The Black Pigmy in the Monkey Cage: An Exhibition in Bad Taste, Offensive to Honest Men, and Unworthy of New York City's Government."

Others protested the exhibit specifically on the grounds that it was not fair to the pygmy. "Ota Benga is not a representative of the lowest order of savage. There

⁸ "Colored Ministers to Act," *The New York Times*, Monday, September 10, 1906, in *Ota: The Pygmy in the Zoo*, by Phillips Verner Bradford and Harvey Blume, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 259.

⁹ A.E.R., "The Caged Pygmy," *The New York Globe*, Wednesday, September 12, 1906, in Bradford and Blume, 264.

are larger tribes which are less developed than he and his tribesmen. He is bright and mastered a good many English words already and is skillful at manual work," proclaimed an article in the *Wellsville Daily Reporter*.¹⁰ Additional newspapers expressed concern that the display "does not lend itself well to scientific purposes, but only gratifies an idle curiosity and a rather brutal sense of humor," noting the societal impulse to mock the pygmy rather than study him.¹¹

For some the exhibit even became a symbol of the unsavory consequences to a growing attitude in twentieth-century American society. "We become a nation of sociologists," an article in *The North American* reads, "look at the curious object's teeth, feel his muscle, prick his skin. We try to make him swallow a constitution, and wonder whether he can sit up straight when it gets lodged at a painful angle in his abdominal region."¹² Further evidence of this sentiment was seen on September 19, 1906 when the *New York Times* published a poem entitled "Ota Benga," with the final lines reading:

¹⁰ "Pygmy Ota and His Pet Chimpanzee," *Wellsville Daily Reporter*, (Wellsville, New York) Tuesday, September 25, 1906.

¹¹ "Topic of the Times," *New York Times*, Tuesday, September 11, 1906, in Bradford and Blume, 263.

¹² "Civilization," *The North American*, September 17 or 18, 1906 in Bradford and Blume, 269.

'Mid companions we provide him,
Apes, gorillas, chimpanzees,
He's content! Wherefore decry them
When he seems at ease?
So he chatters and he jabbers
In his jargon, asking naught
But for "Money—money—money!"
Just as we have taught!¹³

These examples illustrate that, for many, the exhibit signified a larger concern—the nature of an increasingly materialistic society in America.

Also at the root of the argument was the notion that Benga was placed on display beside apes to convey proof of scientific evolution. In response to Reverend MacArthur's comments one column sought to defend the exhibit. "The reverend colored brother should be told that evolution, in one form or another, is now taught in the text books of all the schools, and that it is no more debatable than the multiplication table," an opinion in the *New York Times* asserted.¹⁴ Meanwhile other advocates of the exhibit argued that Benga was in fine condition. "As for Benga himself . . . it is absurd to make moan over the imagined humiliation and degradation he is suffering," stated an article in the *New York Times*.¹⁵ According to one reporter Benga "appeared to be supremely happy," and "has never shown the slightest distaste for the close companionship of the orang outang."¹⁶ Another

¹³ "Ota Benga," *New York Times*, Wednesday, September 19, 1906 in Bradford and Blume, 270.

¹⁴ "Topics of the Times: The Pigmy is not the Point," *New York Times*, September 12, 13 or 14, 1906, in Bradford and Blume, 266.

¹⁵ "Topics of the Times: Send him Back to the Woods," *New York Times*, Tuesday, September 11, 1906, in Bradford and Blume, 263.

¹⁶ H.A. Brower, "Tiny Folk from the Dark Forest," *The Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette*, Sunday, October 14, 1906, Page 16.

insisted that Benga grew used to the crowds and even reveled in their laughter, never stopping to question its origins.¹⁷

In response to the scandal Dr. William Hornaday of the Bronx Zoo claimed the situation to be merely a misunderstanding. “I am a believer in the Darwinian theory,” he proclaimed, “but, I hope my colored brethren will not take the absurd position that I am giving the exhibition to show the close analogy of the African savage to the apes. Benga is in the primate house because that was the most comfortable place we could find for him.”¹⁸ Hornaday later spoke of the exhibit location also being ideal because it was the only area large and open enough for visitors to see Benga. As a result of the controversy he allowed Benga to roam the grounds of the zoo freely during his time there. On a larger scale, the public response of indignation at the exhibit helped ensure that educational institutions would no longer display live humans for the purpose of asserting beliefs about racial superiority.

Humans on Display in Modern Exhibits

And yet the placement of humans on display in itself did not end. Many of the lesser-known exhibits with live humans on display actually took place in the twenty-first century. Internationally, the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) held a similar exhibit in 2005 that displayed humans alongside the other animals there without a

¹⁷ “Colored Ministers to Act,” *New York Times*, Monday, September 10, 1906, in Bradford and Blume, 259.

¹⁸ “Committee Visits the Zoo,” *New York Times*, Tuesday, September 11, 1906, in Bradford and Blume, 262.

racial connotation. The exhibit, the *Human Zoo*, lasted for the August bank holiday and featured multiple humans on display, “to demonstrate the basic nature of man as an animal and examine the impact that Homo sapiens have on the rest of the animal kingdom.”¹⁹ Four years later, also during a bank holiday, the London Zoo offered another temporary exhibit with a live human component. In this exhibit, *Room with a Zoo*, a man named Paul Hutton became the mammal on display for three days. ZSL gave visitors the opportunity to examine him inside of a small enclosure, observe his feeding and exercise times, and follow his thoughts on Twitter throughout the experience. While *Human Zoo* displayed multiple humans, *Room with a Zoo* focused on one individual and used social media sites to promote him.

Month at the Museum (MATM) was another exhibit that featured live humans on display to the public. It was held at the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry (MSI) with one exhibit installment beginning in October 2010 and lasting a month and a second and final installment commencing in October 2011 and also continuing for a month. It also featured a contest to find the perfect candidate to live inside the museum for 30 days. The application consisted of a written portion and a 60 second video of the contender explaining why they should be chosen. For the first *MATM* MSI reviewed more than 1,500 applicants and chose the top 5 based on the submission videos and qualifications listed in the application. Once MSI chose the final 5, they then left the decision up to public vote. They declared contestant Kate

¹⁹ ZSL London Zoo, “The Human Zoo,” August 17, 2005, ZSL, <http://www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/news/the-human-zoo,180,NS.html> (accessed November 20, 2012).

McGroarty the winner of *MATM* on October 7, 2010. McGroarty, a 24-year-old native of Minnesota, was a theater performance major from Northwestern University. She worked as a high school theater teacher in Chicago before her time on display at MSI.

For the second installment of *MATM* contestants followed the same process, and MSI received over 1,000 applicants and chose 6 finalists. On October 5, 2011 the museum announced that the winner of *MATM 2* was Kevin Byrne, a 33 years old digital marketing analyst in Chicago. Byrne was born in Virginia and attended the College of William and Mary where he majored in biology. He later earned his master's degree in integrated marketing communication at Northwestern University.

The winner of the *MATM* contest, or the museum roommate as they were often referred, stayed inside the building at all times unless asked by MSI to attend a special outside event for marketing or public relations purposes. For 30 days the participant explored the exhibits, interacted with visitors, served as a museum ambassador and wrote about their experiences online along the way. During this time, they had limited contact with the outside world except through blogs and social media sites. The main exhibit area in which the roommates stayed was known as "the cube," and it was displayed on the main floor of the museum. Kate and Kevin were not always confined to that space, however. MSI encouraged them to explore anywhere in the exhibit with no limitations and created private sleeping quarters for them as well.

Finally, there are cases of humans becoming collections at libraries across the nation. The project is named *The Human Library* and essentially it allows the public to “check out” another individual and learn about them. “You read to gain knowledge and maybe even understanding of the other. In return, you can ask what you’ve always wanted to know,” the website explains.²⁰ The idea behind the creation of *The Human Library* is to help people target their prejudices by simply sitting down, having a 30-45 minute conversation and learning more about another perspective.

What Does This Mean?

What is particularly noticeable is how closely many of these modern exhibits resemble earlier exhibits. For example, *MATM* showed strikingly similar elements as the display of the pygmy Ota Benga. Through his display at the World’s Fair Benga profited from interested tourists by charging 5 cents from visitors who wanted to see his “cannibal teeth.”²¹ Likewise the *MATM* roommates received \$10,000 dollars for their month of work. Benga, during some of his time at the zoo, as well as Kate and Kevin during their month at the museum, could roam the grounds freely after hours, gaining access to experiences that the general public was

²⁰ “Why Become a Reader?” Human Library Organization, <http://humanlibrary.org/why-become-a-reader-in-the-living-library.html> (accessed January 7, 2013).

²¹ Samuel Verner, “An Untold Chapter of My Adventures While Hunting Pygmies in Africa,” *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Sunday, September 4, 1904.

not allowed. Finally, both Benga and the museum roommates received national recognition through their significant quantity of press attention.

And yet despite the numerous similarities in content, these exhibits are perceived in completely different ways, suggesting it is not the “what” that has changed as much as the “why.” Ultimately the major difference between the cases of humans on display, even centuries apart, is the presiding societal attitudes behind them. From a time of imperialism to globalization, western society has witnessed a momentous shift in attitudes towards foreign cultures. While they once exhibited humans to promote cultural or racial superiority, it seems we now feature people on display to either show the impact of our collective species or to support an individual’s value in society.

The Thesis

My project includes a closer analysis of these exhibits that feature a live human. Naturally, a valuable asset to this information originates from the participants themselves. Their social media pages, blogs, online videos, and pictures were examined. Since I am considering the social responses to the exhibits in particular, comments by the public, whether in news articles or personal blogs, are particularly relevant as well. Much of the research is dedicated to evaluating how much content of these exhibits are relevant to educational purposes, marketing or public relations related endeavors, or how much comes across as a source for individuals to parade personal information. Thus, in order to organize this material,

I explored a few general categories of societal motivations behind the support of exhibits of this nature.

The first section asserts that a large portion of the success of modern museum exhibits with live humans on display was due to a societal fascination with fame. The desire for fame, I argue, drove visitor participation because visitors found substantial value in the chance to gain recognition. The vast allure of fame also encouraged public interest in participation to become the next museum display and established consecutive public relations and marketing benefits for the people, businesses, and organizations that supported the exhibit or educational institution involved.

The second portion of my study revolves around explaining the subsequent societal interest in the concept of the intrinsic value of the individual. To illustrate this notion I used evidence from the visitor comments on social media pages for *MATM* specifically. I also compiled research that construes results from a general categorization of user comments on those social media sites.

For the third section I look into another major factor encouraging visitor interest—the spread of authority and ensuing increased visitor participation opportunities within museums. This heightened interest, in many ways a ramification of the concentration on the individual in our culture, reveals the public desire to contribute on a deeper level and see proof that their opinions matter. In many ways this becomes harder to determine the purpose behind exhibits in a postmodern world. I will argue that we need to find a balance between visitor participation and content provided by educational institutions. Although the

primary goal of museums is to serve the public, we cannot lose confidence in the experience and education of our professionals or the purpose of our exhibits.

Research

I believe that we can no longer rely on publications alone to understand the public voice, especially when popular culture, social media, and online resources are so prominent in our society. Therefore, I dedicated a portion of my research to analyzing the public response to exhibits with humans on display based on the reactions and responses of social media users. The accessibility and quantity of this research option made it the ideal opportunity to investigate.

A majority of my research analyzes information specifically involving the *Month at the Museum* exhibits. For part of this research I examined the content posted on the Twitter and Facebook pages by the *MATM* roommates. I analyzed this material and classified their posts and tweets into various categories to reflect a reader's understanding of the major purpose behind each one. For the Twitter pages one of the categories was for comments that advertised a MSI exhibit or event, including any self-promotional comments for the *MATM* exhibits. A second category consisted of comments with content that advertised a business, person, or organization other than the museum, and a third category included comments with purposefully educational content, specifically scientific or relevant to the history of MSI. The fourth category is dedicated to comments that were posted in response to other tweeters, as indicated by the inclusion of a link to the Twitter page of the

commenter they address. Finally, the fifth category, “Other,” entails any content that does not fall under any of the four preceding categories.

As Facebook is a social media page with different objectives and formatting than Twitter, the categories for the *MATM* roommates’ Facebook wall posts likewise varied slightly. Essentially, the first three categories were the same as the Twitter analysis, but I removed the category devoted to comments that responded directly to another social media user since that type of interaction is not determinable on Facebook. Instead, “Other” became the fourth and final category.

I committed another significant portion of my study to analyzing how public users responded on the social media pages dedicated to the *MATM* exhibits. I applied this research to the museum roommates’ Facebook page and dissected it for quantifiable results. For this section I evaluated the number of Facebook “likes” and comments for each of the roommates’ posts on their walls. I then categorized the comments into 6 categories to reflect what I saw as the visitor motivation behind them. In this case a significant amount of comments met requirements for more than one category, and it became increasingly more difficult to pinpoint a primary motivation. Therefore, a number of comments were calculated in multiple categories. The categories included:

1. Comments that expressed encouragement towards the *MATM* exhibit and/or participant
2. Comments that asked the *MATM* roommate a question or gave them advice directly
3. Comments that shared a personal story or offered personal information

- about the user posting the comment
4. Response to an exhibit or event or educational information (the two were often intertwined so I combined the categories)
 5. Comments expressing jealousy towards the museum roommate
 6. Other (For comments that could not be filed into any of the above categories)

Also please note that for multiple Facebook post sections there were not always the same number of comments viewable as the records indicated at the top of the post, suggesting that perhaps the page owner deleted a few of the comments. I also tallied the number of missing comments on each post for my research. Although this research is very subjective by nature, it can perhaps be used to shed light on how the public, at least those who use social media, responded to the exhibits that featured live humans and contribute to the overall understanding of the underlying purpose from the public eye.

Literature Review

There was a surprisingly limited amount of content regarding the existence of cultural groups on display in America during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Articles such as “The Other History of Intercultural Performance” by Coco Fusco examine modern art exhibits featuring humans on display.²² It also provides a brief but helpful timeline that highlights some major examples of live humans on exhibition from the late fifteenth century to the end of the twentieth. *Exhibiting*

²² Coco Fusco, “The Other History of Intercultural Performance,” *TDR*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Spring, 1994), 143-167.

Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays also delivers a general perspective on exhibition of humans for cultural studies and features a particularly significant article from Curtis Hinsley about people on display at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.²³ Raymond Corbey's article, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," also highlighted the major examples of humans on display.²⁴ *Ota Benga: Pygmy at the Zoo* was also an extremely useful source that provided a background story of Benga as well as copious amounts of primary research through letters and articles, which were presented in an appendix.²⁵

There were a number of psychology and sociology publications that contribute to an understanding of societal behavior patterns. Psychology professor Jean M. Twenge's books *Generation Me*²⁶ and *The Narcissism Epidemic*, which was also written by W. Keith Campbell, added considerably to this study.²⁷ A work with similar content entitled *Generation X Goes to College* offers a more specific study to generational behavioral patterns in educational circumstances.²⁸ Also, the riveting article "Angels in Digital Armor: Technoculture and Terror Management" provides

²³ Curtis Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," in ed. Ivan Karp and Steven Lavine, *Exhibiting Cultures: the Poetics and Politics of Museum Displays*, (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1991), 344-365.

²⁴ Raymond Corbey, "Ethnographic Showcases, 1870-1930," *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 8, Issue 3, (August 1993), 338-369.

²⁵ Bradford and Blume, Appendix.

²⁶ Jean M. Twenge, *Generation Me*, (New York: Free Press, 2006).

²⁷ Jean M. Twenge and W. Keith Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement*, (New York: Free Press, 2009).

²⁸ Peter Sacks, *Generation X Goes to College*, (Chicago: Open Court, 1996).

great insight into how our identities are inadvertently affected by a culture of growing technology opportunities.²⁹ When incorporated together, these sources offer a substantial look at modern societal patterns that museums can consider when studying visitor behaviors and needs.

Some museum studies literature addresses the significance of considering visitors as individuals during the creation of museum exhibits. John Falk's *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience* and Kathleen McLean's *Panning for People in Museum Exhibitions* are among earlier museum education works that encourage visitor study and building exhibits around visitor interest to a greater degree.³⁰ Nina Simon also focuses on visitors in the creation and execution of museums in her book, *The Participatory Museum*.³¹ Perhaps no other book includes such an in depth study of modern exhibits that entail heavy visitor participation.

There have also been some recent studies on the effectiveness of social media for museums and educational institutions. Richard Macmanus offers a study, "Social Media Case Study: Brooklyn Museum," which explores the effectiveness of social media options.³² He researched how often those media sites were updated

²⁹ Marcel O'Gorman, "Angels in Digital Armor: Technoculture and Terror Management," *Postmodern Culture*, Vol. 20 No. 3 (May 2010).

³⁰ John Falk, *Identity and the Museum Visitor Experience*, (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2009). And Kathleen McLean, *Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions*, (Washington D.C.: Association of Science-Technology Centers, 1993).

³¹ Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum*, (Santa Cruz: Museum 2.0, 2010).

³² Richard Macmanus, "Social Media Case Study: Brooklyn Museum," *Readwriteweb* (Sept. 5, 2011), http://readwrite.com/2011/09/05/social_media_case_study_brooklyn_museum (accessed January 21, 2013).

and the amount of feedback that each was receiving to determine if the museum might perhaps be spending too much time working to accommodate too many types of media. Meanwhile articles such as “Virtual Spaces and Museums” by Andrea Bandelli and “Empowering the Remote Visitor: Supporting Social Museum Experiences among Local and Remote Visitors” by Areti Galani and Matthew Chalmers explore the effectiveness of social interactions for visitors through online opportunities that museums provided.³³ *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience: Handheld Guides and Other Media* also offered useful articles on the role of technology such as social media in the museum environment.³⁴ Although these studies are ideal for recognizing the pros and cons of online social interaction opportunities none of these sources look too closely at possible visitor motivations and behavioral patterns behind the statistics.

Finally, the dispute on the role of the museum in postmodern world and the sharing of authority among visitors and museums has received much attention by scholars over the years. For example, in his article “The Web and the Unassailable Voice,” Peter Walsh argues against institutional authority and praises the Internet for its contributions in debunking the myth of one dominant voice to rule all.³⁵

³³ Andrea Bandelli, “Virtual Spaces and Museums,” in ed. Ross Parry, *Museums in a Digital Age*, (London: Routledge Press, 2009), 148-152. And Matthew Chalmers and Areti Galani, “Empowering the Remote Visitor: Supporting Social Museum Experiences Among Local and Remote Visitors,” in Ed. Ross Parry, *Museums in a Digital Age*, (London: Routledge Press, 2009), 159-169.

³⁴ LÖic Tallon and Kevin Walker, Eds., *Digital Technologies and the Museum Experience: Handheld Guides and Other Media*, (Lanham: Alta Mira Press, 2008).

³⁵ Peter Walsh, “The Web and the Unassailable Voice,” in Ed. Ross Parry, *Museums in a Digital Age*, (London: Routledge Press, 2009), 229-236.

Carol Vogel conveys a similar message in her article “The Spirit of Sharing,” which advocates that visitors have much knowledge that they can bring and share when given the opportunity.³⁶ Kathleen McLean’s article “Whose Questions, Whose Conversations?” also argues for conversation among museums and visitors rather than one-way communication.³⁷ Valuable articles and case studies such as McLean’s were included in the book *Letting Go? Shared Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, which became an irreplaceable source for this study.³⁸ But while those works tend to advocate more authority for the public, I will argue that we need to strive towards a balance between visitor contributions and the experience of our professionals in educational institutions.

³⁶ Carol Vogel, “The Spirit of Sharing,” *The New York Times*, Art & Design, (March 16, 2011), <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/17/arts/design/museums-pursue-engagement-with-social-media.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> (accessed January 22, 2013).

³⁷ Kathleen McLean, “Whose Questions, Whose Conversations?” in *Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User Generated World*, Eds. Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene and Laura Koloski, (Philadelphia: The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011).

³⁸ Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene and Laura Koloski, Eds., *Letting Go?: Sharing Historical Authority in a User Generated World*, (Philadelphia: The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011).

CHAPTER TWO

All about Fame

New York Times bestselling author, Lionel Shriver, once wrote, “In a country that doesn't discriminate between fame and infamy, the latter presents itself as plainly more achievable.”¹ This quote sends a chilling message about how powerful the desire for fame has been among individuals in our society. It asserts that many people would choose even notoriety over the painful and suggestively unacceptable state of anonymity.

In “Angels in Digital Armor: Technoculture and Terror Management,” Marcel O’Gorman recalls the story of Jamal Albarghouti, a student at Virginia Tech who was present at the shooting in 2006. Albarghouti experienced instantaneous fame when he boldly ran towards the shooting with the camera on his cell phone running, risking his life for the choice to capture the horrific scene on video. “Like the contestants on reality TV programs,” O’Gorman notes, “Albarghouti demonstrates that, thanks to the omnipotence of American media, even those of us on the sidelines can cash in on the promise of celebrity that is waved in front of us on a daily basis.”²

Consider further that, according to a study by Dr. Jean M. Twenge, when asked to choose between fame or contentment only 17% of Baby Boomers chose

¹ Lionel Shriver, *We Need to Talk about Kevin*, (New York: Counterpoint, 2003), 168.

² O’Gorman, 7.

fame while 29% of the millennial generation valued fame over contentment.³ The desire for fame, it appears, is a growing trend in our society.

Adding further fuel to the flame, our society witnesses the rise of celebrities on a constant basis, and sometimes they come from the most unconventional of places. For example, few Americans today would fail to recognize the name of Justin Bieber, the boy who became a pop sensation after he posted videos of his musical performances on YouTube. Kim Kardashian is another star that witnessed immediate attention after she was seen in a scandalous video, which quickly went viral on the Internet. These individuals illustrate some truth to the famous saying from 1968 by American artist Andy Warhol that “in the future everybody will be world famous for fifteen minutes.”

So why are we so attracted to the idea of fame? Many authors attribute this development to the influence of postmodernism on societal expectations. People began to question the existence of an absolute truth, and this altered the nature and hierarchy of society completely. As O’Gorman explains, the western world has since witnessed “the dissolution of traditional hero systems on the one hand . . . and the propagation of mass media heroes on the other hand.”⁴ Decades ago movies, TV shows, and books depicted good vs. evil, and featured the flawless, attractive individual with a selfless desire to change the world versus the flawed, self-indulgent one. However postmodernity recognizes that there are multiple perspectives, each with their own unique logic and reasoning. Essentially there are

³ Twenge, 87.

⁴ O’Gorman, 8.

no longer heroes and villains, only people. And yet, the urge for many to place someone on the pedestal is too strong, and thus society turns to celebrities to fill the gap.

Consider further the concept of notoriety, or even death, being more desirable in our society than simply remaining anonymous. As the postmodernism idea can attest, our society has gone in the opposite direction, and now it is the most unusual, and sometimes offensive, person who stands out the most that gets the fame. For example, Snooki, a star from the reality TV show *Jersey Shore*, is known specifically for her obnoxious attitude. Despite the negative public image that she acquired, Snooki became one of the highest paid reality television stars, supporting the notion that even bad press is often favorable in our society. At the height of her popularity, some stores even marketed Snooki wigs for Halloween so fans could dress up as her.

Charlie Sheen is another example of an actor whose antics have gained him even more fame. His history of alcohol and drug abuse and allegations of domestic violence have earned him numerous headlines. With the help of Fiat, he even starred in a car commercial of himself driving a stylish car recklessly through a mansion into the middle of a party, suggesting that his recent house arrest is cool rather than a serious punishment. These are our current “heroes,” the people we idolize and dress up as for Halloween. Gone are the days of praising the individual who acts for the sake of others. Instead, it is the celebrities who act the most radical or obnoxious, the ones with the most interesting flaws, that find the most screen time.

And our culture sits helplessly enthralled on the sidelines, unable to deny this fascination with what the societal rebels might do next.

A Translation for the Museum Community

Museums try to tap into this societal obsession with fame by incorporating it into their exhibits. More and more exhibits are focusing on fame for the individual and even banking on a promotion of visitor interaction, a daring move. “When a contributory project relies on visitors’ contributions to succeed,” Nina Simon, a museum director and author, reminds readers, “it generates both high risk and high institutional investment. If participants don’t act as requested, the project can quite publically fail.”⁵

Fortunately, MSI created an exhibit that did not suffer from a lack of interest in participation among the public. The \$10,000 prize for the participant and a lifetime of free admission to the museum were undoubtedly appealing factors that encouraged a number of applicants. However, money was certainly not the only incentive that helped to ensnare participants for the *MATM*. Due to the unconventional nature of the exhibit, the museum roommate received celebrity status almost instantly. The public knew to expect success and fame, especially after seeing the impressive results of over 1,500 applicants for the first *MATM* alone.

A number of the video entries submitted to the *MATM* contest that were also posted on YouTube complements the idea that people believe the most radical or unusual videos will receive the greatest quantity of public attention. Take Chester

⁵ Simon, 208.

Bennett's video entry, for example, which featured a rap explaining why he would be a good candidate for *MATM* but then concluded with video footage of him jumping off a bridge.⁶ There was no explanation as to why he did this other than merely to show the lengths that he was willing to go to in order to gain attention. During the same contest, Adam Veness submitted a video entry during which he proclaims that he would forfeit the prize money if MSI allowed him to get married in their museum.⁷ He then proceeds to ask his girlfriend Emily to marry him in the middle of the video. Another unusual video entry from a *MATM2* applicant was by Emill Kim, a participant who held a difficult yoga position throughout most of his entry video while he listed his qualifications.⁸ They are undoubtedly successful at getting attention, but it should be noted that none of these entries were finalists. Just the fact that they believed it necessary to do something crazy in order to get noticed in the competition illustrates how dominant fame has become in our society.

Fame for the Human on Display

During the *Room with a Zoo* exhibit in the London Zoo, participant Paul Hutton used his social media space to endorse his newfound fame. "Just spoke to a

⁶ Chester Bennett, "Chester Bennett Month at the Museum video app," YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t53fCMgApd0> (accessed January 16, 2013).

⁷ Adam Veness, "Month at the Museum – Adam Veness – Director's Cut," YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ifeMESGbyQ> (accessed January 16, 2013).

⁸ Emill Kim, "Emill Kim's 60-second video for "Month at the Museum 2.," YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kKhfMHRDgSY> (accessed January 16, 2013).

family who came in especially to see me. I'm famous!" he exclaimed on Twitter on May 23, 2009.⁹ One of his tweets from the day before announced, "Lots of photographers came along to watch as I saw my new home."¹⁰ Although *Room with a Zoo* received a decent amount of press based on the concept alone, social media opportunities truly invited the participant to promote himself.

For the most part *MATM* roommates Kate and Kevin react to their status of fame with humility. "I never, never expected so many people to show so much interest in me," Kate explains on a MSI podcast, "I can't really get that big of a head about it because it's really interest in the museum. Because I think my job is just . . . to tell everyone how wonderful the museum is."¹¹ Kevin also devoted a few social media posts to the support of the museum and visitors as well as a blog entry, "Thank You & See You Later," which thanks visitors, followers, and MSI specifically.

But it was still evident that the museum roommates valued the aspect of fame. For example, during an interview *ABC News* asked Kate why she wanted to be MSI's new roommate, and she announced, "it's just the biggest adventure I think I could have in a lifetime, nobody has ever done this before, it's the first time they're

⁹ Paul Hutton, "Room with a Zoo Twitter," posted on May 23, 2009, <https://twitter.com/roomwithazoo> (accessed November 14, 2012).

¹⁰ Paul Hutton, "Room with a Zoo Twitter," posted on May 22, 2009, <https://twitter.com/roomwithazoo> (accessed November 14, 2012).

¹¹ "MSI Podcast #13 Month at the Museum- Kate McGroarty," Museum of Science and Industry, http://www.msichicago.org/fileadmin/Activities/Podcast/MSI-013_MATM-KateMcGroarty.mp3 (accessed November 18, 2012).

inviting someone to live here for a month.”¹² While the experience itself is a quintessential component of the appeal in *MATM* for the participant, it seems the concept of being the first person with the opportunity was also high on her list of benefits.

In some cases the roommates even campaign for more attention. On one of his tweets Kevin composed a request to his fans: “Dearest Twitterati, is it uncouth to nominate myself for a #FF? I wouldn't want to offend. Of course, if YOU suggested me... <blushes>.”¹³ In this public request Kevin angles for further public support through followers on Twitter, presumably to intensify his own fame and make the *MATM 2* exhibit appear more successful as well.

The media also played a starring role in amplifying the fame of Kate and Kevin. A number of news stations, a majority in the Chicago area, picked up on the exhibit and quickly began to follow the *MATM* celebrities. Their names quickly found headlines. “Kate McGroarty's Month At The Museum: Living In The Museum Of Science And Industry,” graced the presence of a *Huffington Post* article on November 16, 2010. During *MATM2*, Kevin saw great press as well, including interviews with local Chicago shows such as “You & Me This Morning,” along with the major news stations.

¹² “Kate McGroarty's Month at the Museum,” ABC News Video, <http://abcnews.go.com/GMA/video/kate-mcgroartys-month-museum-11925195> (accessed October 14, 2010).

¹³ #FF is a hashtag standing for “Follow Friday,” which Twitter users can use on their own pages to recommend other Twitter pages to their own followers. Kevinatmsi [Kevin Byrne], comment on October 27, 2011, MSIKevin's Twitter Page, www.twitter.com/kevinatmsi (accessed October 19, 2012).

Visitor comments on *MATM* social media pages certainly reflected a notice of this publicity as well. “Ahhh [*sic*] the loss of anonymity [*sic*] that comes with fame,” one fan commented on Kevin’s Facebook page.¹⁴ “I loved seeing you on Good Morning America this a.m.! Hello from Mt. Shasta, CA!” another enthusiastic fan writes, proving that the media attention for *MATM* reached audiences even outside Illinois.¹⁵

Further evidence of the roommate’s fame can be found in a letter written to Kate from a museum fan and featured in *Las Vegas Weekly*. The fan, Kristen, praises the success of *MATM* and requests that Kate grace Las Vegas with her presence in one of their museums. “I read that in Chicago, the locals would go to the museum just to see you, so your arrival here might help get people out of their homes,” the letter remarks.¹⁶ This is further proof of the celebrity status that Kate received from this exhibit. She became so renowned that fans like Kristen would ask for her help specifically rather than encourage her local museums to take charge and create a similar contest and exhibit.

Also YouTube reveals multiple signs that Kate’s celebrity status grew quite rapidly. By the fourth day of her time at MSI, the public was already bragging when

¹⁴ Cheryl Rogers, comment on October 8, 2011, “Kevin’s Month at the Museum” Facebook page, comment posted on October 8, 2011 at 6:46 am, <http://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

¹⁵ Darlene Templer-Sellman, comment on October 20, 2010, “Kate’s Month at the Museum” Facebook page, comment posted on October 20, 2010 at 3:39pm, <http://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

¹⁶ Kristen Peterson, “An Open Letter to Kate McGroarty,” *Las Vegas Weekly*, <http://www.lasvegasweekly.com/news/2010/dec/01/open-letter-kate-mc/> (accessed October 13, 2012).

they met her. On October 31, 2010 through YouTube one fan using the name Tmidiman even posted a video recording of his encounters with Kate at the lunch line inside the museum. The video featured several compliments and questions towards Kate, and it seemed very reminiscent of how the public reacts when they see a traditional celebrity. The next day Kate also received a comment in response to one of her videos, "Night Five," with a marriage proposal by a user named TychoSean.¹⁷ Chances are if you polled people off the street very few could say that they received marriage proposals or YouTube attention from strangers very often. The modern exhibits featuring a human on display certainly fashioned a fresh and instantaneous method of acquiring fame.

Fame for Visitors and Viewers

"Ordinary people can also find a taste of fame on the Internet," Twenge reminds readers, because "anyone can put up a Web page, start a LiveJournal . . . or post to message boards."¹⁸ Perhaps what makes *MATM* so appealing to the public audience is the idea that they can use social media opportunities to share in the fame, even if only for a moment. Users can feel gratification by seeing their name in print on the screen alongside the museum roommate where other social media visitors can read it. Ultimately with the inclusion of social media fame is more accessible to the visitors.

¹⁷ TychoSean, comment on "Night Five," YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=baeqbezNl9s> (accessed January 17, 2013).

¹⁸ Twenge, 89.

Consider the first comment posted on Kevin's Month at the Museum Facebook page, which read "FIRST! (Sorry couldn't resist) Enjoy your month Kevin, I'm sure it will be amazing."¹⁹ The poster appeared eager for the opportunity to acquire fame by being the first person to comment on the museum celebrity's Facebook page. In fact, it seemed like the primary motivation behind the comment while the encouraging message to Kevin reads like an afterthought. Meanwhile a number of people used the page to share their own stories and experiences. On Kevin's blog entry entitled "Wait – this is learning?!" one follower wrote what started out as an encouraging comment: "We have got to get to some of those classes. My kids and I always seem to miss it on the schedules! Your month at MSI looks like its going well! <http://tracey-justanothermommyblog.blogspot.com/>."²⁰ She included a link to her own blog on her comment in hopes that she could use Kevin's popularity to add to her own.

For further examples ponder the number of times that friends and family members would flaunt their connections with the museum roommates through social media sites. On Facebook, Kevin's relatives would message him publically rather than using the Facebook message option. One relative in particular, Kevin's cousin, wrote "Your cuz" at the end of every comment on Facebook, letting everyone

¹⁹ Mike Holl, comment on October 5, 2011, "Kevin's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, comment posted on October 5, 2011 at 1:49 pm, <http://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

²⁰ Tracey Becker, comment on "Wait – this is learning?!", *Month at the Museums 2 blog*, comment posted on October 22, 2011, <http://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/10/21/wait-this-is-learning-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

know her connection to the participant. Even Kate noticed, or at least joked, that her friends took advantage of the opportunity to obtain a piece of fame through her. On her page Kate tweeted, “@NateBaumgart OH I see. YOU just want to engage me in twitter conversation so you end up on the twitter feed screen, HMMM?” She called the user out on perhaps the true motivation behind the tweet—to see his name on the museum celebrity’s Twitter page.²¹

Many of the general public visitor comments on the *MATM* online pages also featured a promotion of themselves based on their experiences interacting with the museum roommate. On one of Kate’s last video entries entitled “Kate’s Late Night,” one comment reads “My mom voted for you and we met you in October.”²²

Meanwhile countrygirl31393 commented later on the same page to Kate: “Dont [*sic*] know if you remember, but Im [*sic*] the girl who on your first day their [*sic*] said I felt like a nerd asking you for a picture.”²³

Similar comments are found on both Kate and Kevin’s Facebook pages. Nicole Krawczyk posted “I met you today and got a picture with you, pretty excited to hear more about your stay.”²⁴ On Kevin’s page one person left an encouraging comment and included herself among Kevin’s conglomeration of fans: “Your adoring

²¹ Msikate[Kate McGroarty], comment on November 9, 2010, “MSIKate Twitter page,” <http://www.twitter.com/msikate> (accessed October 19, 2012).

²² 21pokemonrule, comment on “Kate’s Late Night,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY1jX0U5iN4> (accessed December 21, 2012).

²³ Countrygirl31393, comment on “Kate’s Late Night,” YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY1jX0U5iN4> (accessed December 21, 2012).

²⁴ Nicole Krawczyk, comment on October 20, 2011, “Kate’s Month at the Museum” Facebook page, comment posted on October 20, 2011 at 3:57 pm, <http://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

fans voted you in – and we know you won't disappoint us!"²⁵ These remarks illustrate a trend among visitors to use social media sites as an opportunity to find fame through any connection, whether a simple vote or a personal visit, with the museum celebrity.

Fame for the Museum

Naturally, the media attention received for *MATM* benefited MSI immensely. ABC's *Good Morning America* and CBS Chicago were among the first to report on the unconventional exhibit early in its development. PBS and MSNBC were among others that released articles about *MATM* and an interview with Kate was also broadcasted on NPR on November 12, 2010. In these news reports MSI's collections were also advertised. "Not even the best real estate agent in the city could have found Kevin Byrne a home with a submarine, a coal mine and Dr. Seuss," states the *Chicago Tribune* in an article praising *MATM*.²⁶ This media attention became an irreplaceable marketing tool for the museum both during and after the conception of *MATM*.

The dynamic *MATM* roommates also created their fair share of publicity for the museum and its collections. "It took me 30 days to really see everything the museum had . . . the 14 acres of exhibits . . . you really can't do it all in one day," Kate

²⁵ Cheryl Rogers, comment on October 8, 2011, "Kevin's Month at the Museum" Facebook page, comment posted on October 8, 2011 at 6:46 am, <http://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

²⁶ Melissa Jenco, "Month at the Museum," *Chicago Tribune News*, October 5, 2011, http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2011-10-05/news/chi-month-at-the-museum-20111005_1_science-and-industry-museum-coal-mine (accessed November 18, 2012).

publicized in a podcast for MSI.²⁷ Kevin also frequently composed online posts that featured positive messages about the museum itself. He even dedicated a blog entry to a brief history of MSI's building, the Palace of Fine Arts, and its history in the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. The unique opportunity of having a museum-sponsored celebrity allowed MSI ample advertising possibilities.

Kate and Kevin also blogged, tweeted, and wrote on Facebook about their interactions with the museum exhibits. Together they compiled over 200 Facebook posts and over 200 tweets advertising MSI exhibits and events to the public.²⁸ Kate and Kevin also composed blog entries regarding their experiences living in the museum, with a majority of those involving specific exhibits. Although Kate's blog is no longer accessible online through MSI's website because the space was replaced with other content, Kevin's blog still shows 28 entries. Finally, together the participants created 50 videos of their experiences and displayed them online as well, offering more visual depictions of the experience. These social media options greatly contributed to the museum's publicity.

A majority of these posts by Kate and Kevin depicted their interactions with exhibits at MSI. Sometimes the content was random and served primarily to advertise the collections. One Facebook post had a picture of Kate wearing flannel pajamas and standing in the center of an exhibit. "Run the model trains in my PJ's:

²⁷ MSI Podcast #13 Month at the Museum- Kate McGroarty," Museum of Science and Industry, http://www.msichicago.org/fileadmin/Activities/Podcast/MSI-013_MATM-KateMcGroarty.mp3 (accessed November 18, 2012).

²⁸ See Appendices C and D for more information

CHECK!” read the caption for the photo.²⁹ In a tweet, Kate commented “This morning I dried my hair in one of Science Storm’s wind booths. Now my hair will look wind tussled all day!”³⁰ These types of comments were perhaps more geared towards engaging the public by associating fun activities and interesting connections with the exhibits.

On many occasions, the museum celebrities used social media opportunities to offer more educational information about the exhibits to their audience, however. On Facebook, Kevin included links to numerous videos that illustrated science experiments. One video, “Bangs, Flashes and Fire,” demonstrated what happened when he ignited a balloon full of hydrogen and oxygen, and his video “Burning Ice!” recorded a MSI worker handling calcium carbide and explaining its reaction with water. Kevin also included blog entries such as “17 Chicks and Counting,” in which he explains the process of working with Garfield Farm Museum to pick out Black Java chicken eggs for the incubator exhibit in MSI. “The black java is one of the oldest breeds in the U.S. and was extremely common but their numbers had dwindled over the years to near extinction. MSI, however, has been working with Garfield Farm to help rebuild the population,” he wrote.³¹ These types of comments

²⁹ Msikate[Kate McGroarty], comment on November 11, 2010, “Kate’s Month at the Museum” Facebook page, www.facebook.com/msikate (accessed October 24, 2012).

³⁰ Msikate [Kate McGroarty], comment on November 15, 2010, “MSI Kate’s Twitter Page,” <http://www.twitter.com/msikate> (accessed October 19, 2012).

³¹ Kevin Byrne, “17 Chicks and Counting,” *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, <http://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/11/13/17-chicks-and-counting-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

took a more educational approach to interacting with the exhibits and encouraging visitor understandings of them.

Compared to the other categories in my research, Kate and Kevin actually devoted a majority of their posts and tweets to the MSI exhibits and events. In fact, over 72% of posts on Kate's Facebook page and over 70% on Kevin's advertised a MSI exhibit or event in some way.³² Although it was not the largest category on Kate's Twitter page, 29% of her comments were devoted to exhibits and events, while more than 38% of Kevin's tweets, the highest percentage out of all of the category options, entailed information about the exhibits and events as well.³³

Based on the responses on the *MATM* social media sites, these efforts found substantial success in the public relations department. Visitors and social media users interacted with the exhibits through these posts — showing both support and interest towards the objects on display. For example, when Kevin posted pictures of his visit to the Fairy castle on Facebook on November 1, 2011, the post received 37 “likes” and 17 comments, at least 5 of which featured visitors proclaiming that it was their favorite exhibit at MSI.³⁴

On her Facebook page, Kate had a number of posts that presented a picture of an item found somewhere in MSI's collection, and she would ask Facebook viewers to guess what the object was. This type of Facebook entry encouraged public feedback and saw quantifiable results. One guess-the-photo post from Kate's

³² See Appendices C and D for more information

³³ See Appendices A and B for more information

³⁴ Please note that this information was current as of November 9, 2012, the date that Kevin's Month at the Museum Facebook page was accessed.

Facebook page on November 11, 2011 with a picture of a sound effect machine received 42 user comments in response, the highest number of comments received on any of Kate's Facebook posts.³⁵ Impressively, all of those 42 user comments were categorized as ones that responded to a MSI exhibit in some fashion because they were all messages suggesting interaction between a commenter and the object.

For many visitors, the pictures posted on Facebook of the various exhibits encouraged them to recall previous visits and interactions. "One of my favorite memories at that museum is when our high school choir sang there and then we could walk around and see Christmas Around the World!" Robin Macier Crawford declared.³⁶ "These pictures bring back memories. My first unofficial date with my wife was a group outing at MSI 12/28/1966," Jim Spoolstra recollected.³⁷ Though it takes on many forms these various types of interaction between visitors and the museum exhibits are invaluable to MSI, especially when recorded on public spaces.

The social media site addition to the *MATM* exhibits also greatly encouraged users to ask questions about the objects on display. On Kate's Facebook page, nearly 20% of user comments involved questions or advice for Kate while Kevin's Facebook page had 17% of user comments ask questions or give advice about

³⁵ Please note that this information was current as of October 24, 2012, the date that Kate's Month at the Museum Facebook page was accessed.

³⁶ Robin Macier Crawford, comment on "Day by Day Favorites" photo album (October 24, 2010), "Kate's Month at the Museum" Facebook page, comment posted on November 7, 2010 at 9:21 am, <http://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

³⁷ Jim Spoolstra, commented on "Day by Day Favorites" photo album (October 24, 2010), "Kate's Month at the Museum" Facebook page, comment posted on November 9, 2010 at 12:09 pm, <http://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

exhibits or *MATM*.³⁸ Although some of the questions were naturally about Kate personally, a majority reflected visitor interest in learning about her schedule or inquiring about an object from MSI's collection. Once, Kate posted another "guess the object" photo (an employee punch clock), and Michael McFall commented "I asked a good friend who is a watchmaker after I stared at it for two hours. When would that have been used?" adding further to the conversation.³⁹ Visitor questions benefit the museum even further because it shows a response from the public and continues the dialogue about the MSI object or exhibit.

The advice portion of that category of visitor interaction is equally important. Visitors used the opportunity to feel included in *MATM* by imparting their own knowledge of exhibits or helping to choose what the roommate should do next. In fact, most of the advice that Kate and Kevin received in user comments consisted of requests for certain exhibits to visit or photograph. On Kevin's Facebook page, one visitor even had some advice for Kevin about a hidden secret in one of the exhibits. "Hey Kevin, next time you walk by Yesterday's Main Street, look at the windows above the photo studio. You may catch someone watching you!" Kaylee Cooper wrote, eager to share her knowledge with the museum celebrity.⁴⁰

³⁸ See Appendices C and D for more information

³⁹ Michael McFall, comment on November 10, 2010, "Kate's Month at the Museum," Facebook Page, comment posted on November 10, 2010 at 6:36 pm, <http://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

⁴⁰ Kaylee Cooper, comment on October 30, 2011, "Kevin's Month at the Museum," comment posted on October 31, 2011 at 8:09 am, <http://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

“Imitation is the highest form of flattery,” goes the old saying. If this adage is true, *MATM* must have been extremely flattered at the creation of a series of 5-minute videos created by Kyle Thiessen entitled “Fake Month at the Museum.” In one of the first videos, Kyle mocked the *MATM* exhibits through a fake submission video that poked fun at the unorthodox nature of the contest. “I hope this reaches you well, your mailing address is unconventional to say the least,” he remarked to the museum in this video parody.⁴¹ In his 15 other videos, he used the living in a museum gimmick to attract an audience while he explained odd facts about history that he discovered during his time at a fake museum in Chicago. He even went as far as to create a Facebook page for Fake Month at the Museum. The page featured video links, photos, and even presumably fake promotions. “Want your very own Venus Flytrap? You could win one at our BIG event. Come check it out!” reads one of his Facebook posts.⁴² The Fake Month at the Museum series was an intricate project that brought further attention to the *MATM* exhibits at MSI, even if it brought more unusual attention than expected.

Fame for the Community

Although marketing and public relations were always a significant factor in the *MATM* exhibits, one cannot help but notice that within the social media sites it

⁴¹ FakeMonthAtTheMuseum, “Fake Month at the Museum Submission Video,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm_XTG1bAUE, (accessed November 19, 2012).

⁴² Fake Month at the Museum, comment on February 7, 2012, “Fake Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/FakeMonthAtTheMuseum>, (accessed November 19, 2012).

developed greatly between *MATM* and *MATM 2*. Kate's Twitter page had only 1 tweet that advertised a person, company, or organization outside of MSI. By contrast, Kevin's Twitter page had 28 tweets directed towards businesses, people, or organizations other than MSI, compiling nearly 9% of his Twitter content overall.⁴³ On Facebook the results were similar between the two museum roommates. Kate had nearly 4% of her posts with the primary motivation appearing to be advertisement for other entities while Kevin's Facebook page contained more than 10%.⁴⁴ Considering the second *MATM* roommate's background in marketing, however, it is logical that he might devote more attention to marketing and public relations aspects of the exhibit.

A number of prominent figures were featured in *MATM* posts. Kevin devotes a few social media posts and a blog entry to the International Association of Chiefs of Police, a group that MSI hosted an event for in October 2011. Kevin also wrote about his meeting with weatherman Tom Skilling, posted pictures of himself and Mayor Emanuel at the Annual Columbian Ball, and tweeted about "having organic green eggs & ham w/[sic] Beard award-winning Chef @SarahStegner."⁴⁵ Kate also appeared to be quite impressed with the opportunity to meet famous astronaut Captain Jim Lovell. "He's an amazingly intelligent, giving and inspirational individual," she proclaimed in a Facebook post and aroused other positive

⁴³ See Appendices A and B for more information

⁴⁴ See Appendices C and D for more information

⁴⁵ Kevinatmsi [Kevin Byrne], comment on October 24, 2011, "MSI Kevin's Twitter Page," <http://www.twitter.com/kevinatmsi> (accessed October 19, 2012).

comments about Lovell from the public.⁴⁶ Perhaps the most encouraging comment to read, however, came from a blog reader who admitted outright in response to one of Kevin's blog entries about a project by the Urban Simulation Team at UCLA, "I never would've heard of Dr. Snyder's work if not for your blog post. Thanks!"⁴⁷ Kate and Kevin created publicity for these individuals and organizations.

Sometimes the publicity was geared more towards the organizations that the *MATM* celebrities were connected with rather than those that the museum itself supported. On Kevin's social media sites, this was evident based on the 3 Facebook posts and 3 tweets that he dedicated to his alma mater, the College of William and Mary, when the college president came to visit the exhibit. In another Facebook comment, Kevin gave a shout out to one of his favorite charities. "Look what I found in the Great Train Story! I'm a big fan of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Illinois so it was cool to find this car," he announced and also attached a picture of one of the MSI trains with a Make-A-Wish logo decorating the side.⁴⁸

The *MATM* celebrities, particularly Kevin, also used social media sites to publicize companies that specifically contributed to the exhibit. "Can I just tell you how much I love my CB2 couch?!? It's like sitting on a teddy bear cloud. Love, love,

⁴⁶ Msikate [Kate McGroarty], comment on October 31, 2010, "Kate's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, <http://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

⁴⁷ Shira, comment on "Sim City: White City Edition," *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, MSI, comment posted on November 5, 2011, <http://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/11/04/sim-city-white-city-edition-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

⁴⁸ Msikevin [Kevin Byrne], comment on November 10, 2011, "Kevin's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, <http://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed October 24, 2012).

love. Thanks CB2 Lincoln Park!” Kevin proclaims on Facebook on November 2, 2011.⁴⁹ Later he tweets for another benefactor: “Thanks @WholeFoodsCHI for feeding me so well while I’m living at @msichicago. Carne asada & chx [sic] pot pie are my new faves [sic].”⁵⁰ Kate also tweets about her exciting experience at the Columbian Ball: “I’m wearing a Steven Rosegard (project runway alum) original dress and Just took a pic with Rahm Emanuel.”⁵¹ In many ways *MATM* became the ideal marketing tool for these companies to invest in because, as they had seen with the first installment of *MATM*, thousands of individuals were following the roommates through social media pages.

It should be noted that in many ways this is good public relations for the museum as well. When considering the sponsors that *MATM* worked with that are being advertised on *MATM* social media sites, they are all companies with a positive public image. Whole Foods, for example, is a supermarket chain known for promoting natural, organic foods and products. As of October 4, 2012, Whole Foods was listed fifth in a compilation of National Top 50 Green Power Partners according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.⁵² By mentioning the support of Whole

⁴⁹ Msikevin [Kevin Byrne], comment on November 2, 2011, “Kevin’s Month at the Museum,” Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed October 24, 2012).

⁵⁰ Kevinatmsi [Kevin Byrne], comment on Nov 10, 2011, “MSI Kevin’s Twitter page,” <http://www.twitter.com/kevinatmsi> (accessed October 19, 2012).

⁵¹ Msikate [Kate McGroarty], comment on October 23, 2010, “MSI Kate’s Twitter page,” <http://www.twitter.com/msikate> (accessed October 19, 2012).

⁵² United States Environmental Protection Agency, “National Top 50,” <http://www.epa.gov/greenpower/toplists/top50.htm> (accessed November 17, 2012).

Foods, MSI also achieves good publicity because the museum is then associated with an environmentally friendly company. The watch that Kevin wears in pictures around the museum and advertises further on Facebook and Twitter from the company GeBO, which stands for “Green Earth, Blue Ocean,” also sends a positive public image. When Kevin is seen supporting a manufacturing company dedicated to environmental awareness and boasting, “For every wristwatch sold, 10 trees will be planted,” on their website, it also promotes a positive image for the celebrity’s benefactor, MSI.⁵³ The marketing benefits that the exhibit provided were multifaceted, reaching MSI as well as the surrounding community.

Conclusion

The obsession with fame is deeply rooted in our society today. It consumes our lifestyle – flooding our television screens, filling the pages of our newspapers, magazines, and blogs, and motivating our social media involvement as well. We are a society that is eager to advertise ourselves, to openly share our own opinions and thoughts without hesitation in hopes of achieving recognition, of finding our own fifteen minutes of fame.

Museums can tap into that interest in fame in similar ways as MSI by using social media opportunities and other visitor-based participation techniques. As we have seen in this study, exhibits such as *Room with a Zoo* and *MATM* promote the value of the individuals on display as well as the institutions involved. *MATM* went

⁵³ GeBO: Green Earth & Blue Ocean, “1 GeBO = 10 Trees,” GeBO, http://www.gebowatch.com/index.php?main_page=service&zenid=d35cc3ca03e27626fac3b973162f7134 (accessed on November 17, 2012).

further with social media and thus extended the opportunity to the visitors and even online visitors as well. Through those sites even public figures and prominent organizations in the community benefited from the unique exhibition of one individual. Finally, businesses were able to boost their own public image and receive further recognition after contributing to the *MATM* exhibit through the social media network as well.

However, as we will see in more depth later in chapter four, in some cases too much reliance upon visitor interest in promotion of themselves can detract from the purpose of museum exhibits. At the same time, it can cause ambiguities regarding the roles of the public, the museum, and the exhibits themselves. When everyone expects a piece of fame, there are inevitably going to be disappointed individuals with their voices unheard.

CHAPTER THREE

Placing the Me Generation on Display

Another illustration of our society can be found in a cartoon by Adam Zyglis, which was published in March 2007. The image depicts two teenagers sitting together at a table. The male figure on the left is listening to an iPod, typing on the computer, and wearing a t-shirt with “myspace” written on it. Despite his evident reliance on technology, he is also wearing a hat that reads “independent.” Meanwhile the female figure beside him is seen reading the tabloids and sitting with her body facing away from the other figure, showing a distance between them. “A study finds our generation more ‘narcissistic,’ than the rest,” the male figure reads aloud while the female figure responds, “Not true. We, like, sooo care about other people.”¹ The satirical message is unmistakable—the millennial generation is portrayed as materialistic, highly self-centered, and completely oblivious to these faults. And perhaps worst of all is that, much like the cartoon and the preceding chapter indicates, society is unequivocally enthralled with fame.

This fascination occurs to such a degree that the everyday tasks of celebrities, even their exercise patterns and eating habits, become newsworthy. As the cartoon we saw in the introduction, the one featuring the Indian woman doing mundane chores, can attest, this concept is not limited to present-day society by any means.

¹ Referencing a cartoon by Adam Zyglis, “*Generation Me*,” published in *The Buffalo News*, March 1, 2007, <http://www.adamzyglis.com/cartoon453.html> (accessed January 7, 2013).

Previous generations have made a habit of watching in awe as other humans performed everyday tasks, as long as the subjects were unusual enough to justify the act. But I would argue that today the obsession has grown even more. This idea is supported by an endless array of reality television shows that consume the entertainment world presently. From early developments such as the 1992 television show *The Real World* to *Big Brother* to a more recent production by ABC called *The Glass House*, a number of these reality TV programs feature people as they try to coexist in a house or community together while continuing to perform the very same daily tasks as their viewers. It inspired movies as well, such as *Ed TV*, a comedy that pokes fun at reality television for producer tactics at creating drama because everyday life is not quite riveting enough on its own.

Naturally, the societal obsession with the mundane is not confined to television or silver screens alone. Anyone involved with online social media can login to a Facebook account and instantly find status updates listing the everyday thoughts and actions of their Facebook friends. Likewise Twitter allows the public to instantly see other people's text-based messages, content that is often used to advertise the author's casual thoughts as well. If authors are not satisfied with these opportunities, there are other online possibilities such as blogs and personal websites to record their comments and share them with the world.

So what accounts for our current interest in viewing the mundane, whether on screen or behind glass? Besides the appeal of connecting with a famous figure, there is ultimately a new fascination with promoting ourselves as individuals. Numerous psychology studies call attention to this phenomenon

particularly in the millennial generation, also often referred to as “Generation Me.” It is perhaps due to this fascination that exhibits such as *MATM* emerged. They take “reality” to the next level. Not only can visitors follow the museum roommates’ every thought online but also they can even see their actions in person if they visit MSI. Every moment of the person’s month can be followed in some form or another, very reminiscent of reality television. Ultimately, this reflects the existence of narcissism in society today.

New Exhibit, Familiar Display

As previously mentioned, MSI designed the *MATM* exhibits to follow the winning participant, or “museum roommate,” as he or she goes through their daily routine. The exhibit space created to display the roommate included the essential pieces of furniture that a majority of visitors would recognize in their own homes including a bed, a chair, a desk and, of course, a computer.² It was certainly created to look like a typical bedroom, aside from the three walls made entirely of glass and its placement in the center of the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry.

Of course, from the participant perspective there is a lot more to see and do. The museum allowed the roommate to wander the grounds of the museum and, after hours, sleep wherever he or she wished. Kate and Kevin shared most of these experiences with visitors through text, images, and video clips. Visitors expressed interest and even jealousy upon viewing them since they do not actually get to

² For useful images Kate included a tour of the exhibit in a video entry: Msikate [Kate McGroarty], “Cube Tour!” Youtube, posted on November 5, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wftUCqn2IK8> (accessed January 5, 2013).

experience the exhibits themselves at night in a secluded museum in quite the same manner.

Coinciding with the familiar design of the exhibit, visitor responses also reflected a surprising concentration on the more relatable aspects of the experiment. An entire news article was devoted solely to explaining Kate's eating habits during her time inside the museum. "That's probably in the top 5 questions I get every day, is what do I eat!" Kate confessed in the interview for the *Chicagoist*.³ And the question of what the museum roommate will eat was number 2 in a staff blog by writers for the *Chicago Magazine* entitled "Five Burning Questions about the MSI's Month at the Museum Contest."⁴ In fact, the inquiries became so common that by the second installment of the Month at the Museum with roommate Kevin Byrne the museum displayed a banner showcasing answers to the most frequently asked questions such as "Do you get to leave this cube?" and "How do you eat," and, of course, "Do you get to shower?"⁵

The frequency of such questions is certainly reflected in the comments from visitors on social media sites as well. "So, I might have missed that part of the

³ Anthony Todd, "Eating through the Month at the Museum," *The Chicagoist*, November 12, 2010, https://chicagoist.com/2010/11/12/eating_through_the_month_at_the_mus.php (accessed October 9, 2012).

⁴ Jennifer Wehunt, "Five Burning Questions about the MSI's Month at the Museum Contest," *The Chicago Magazine*, August 6, 2010, <http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/The-312/August-2010/Five-Burning-Questions-About-the-MSI-Month-at-the-Museum-Contest/> (accessed January 17, 2013).

⁵ See photo in blog entry: Kevin Byrne, "The Kevin Has Landed," *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, <https://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/10/20/the-kevin-has-landed/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

interview, but what are you doing about food and showers? Will you be let outside at all for the next month?" one visitor asks on the first day of Kate's month-long experience.⁶ A few days later another Facebook comment reads "Kate- What do you do when the museum closes? You can watch tv [*sic*] and know what's going on in the world right? (Important stuff like Major League Baseball, Dancing with the Stars!)."⁷ These comments became so prominent that even other users began to joke about them. "Hey Kevin? Where do you sl...eh, never mind," a poster named Amanda wrote on Kevin Byrne's blog after he joked on his blog that he gets that question "342,639 times."⁸ There were certainly a surprising number of inquiries about everyday activities and how they are handled in the exhibit.

Visitors Searching for a Connection

One noticeable trend from the research is that visitors wanted to find a connection between themselves and the subject. In many ways this can reflect the aforementioned desire for fame. But yet it can also illustrate how people just want to find a connection to the *MATM* celebrity in order to make the experience more accessible or relatable for themselves on a more personal level. In a postmodern

⁶ Michael James-Tech, comment on October 20, 2010, "Kate's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, comment posted on October 20, 2010 at 3:34 pm, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

⁷ Sharlene Tasato, comment on October 23, 2010, "Kate's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, Post from October 23, 2010, Commented on October 23, 2010 at 8:19 am, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2010).

⁸ Amanda, comment on "Wait – this is learning?!", *Month at the Museums 2 blog*, comment posted on October 23, 2011, <https://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/10/21/wait-this-is-learning-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

world people are searching for meaning or significance and the opportunity to connect with someone else provides satisfaction for that.

A number of the comments found on the *MATM* social media sites replicated this idea. One comment on Kevin's Facebook page read, "We visited the museum recently and I wondered what kind of goof would be living in that box. Figures it's a fellow W&M alum."⁹ In fact, even a post about Kate's appreciation for the Bottlecaps candy encouraged visitor interaction on Facebook. On her post from November 6, 2010, Kate received 28 "likes" for the message, as well as 6 comments by visitors who shared a love of the candy and were eager to advertise that connection with the public.

Comments on *MATM* social media sites illustrate that many visitors used any opportunity of a connection with the museum roommate to share personal information about them. Psychology professor Jean M. Twenge noticed this phenomenon among the generation during her experience in the classroom. After asking for students to share personal stories that could relate to their lesson for extra credit, she remarked: "None of the students cared if I knew details of their personal lives that other generations would have kept as carefully guarded secrets."¹⁰ According to my research, more than 20% of visitor content on Kate's Facebook page revealed stories or personal information (not including their names,

⁹ Ryan Whitaker, comment on November 9, 2011, "Kevin's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, comment posted on November 9, 2011 at 10:02 am, <https://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

¹⁰ Twenge, 36.

which are automatically posted beside their comments).¹¹ On Kevin's Facebook page, more than 31% of visitor content shared personal information through this public site.¹² It seems that visitors and followers will certainly strive to create and display a connection with the museum roommate even at the expense of disclosing information about themselves to the public in order to make their comment relevant.

Jealousy among the Audience

In further proof that fame was not the only motivation for visitors to find interest in participation with *MATM*, consider whether people would have volunteered to participate even if MSI did not offer a cash prize. My research supports the notion that some visitors would find the opportunity appealing even without those benefits.

There were certainly a significant number of comments that expressed envy at Kate and Kevin for their experiences during *MATM*. "You did something many of us have dreamed of doing over the years," wrote Mickey Borchert.¹³ "Wish I could of done it!!! but shes [*sic*] doing a good job," Angie Ash commented.¹⁴ Although less

¹¹ See Appendix E for more information

¹² See Appendix F for more information

¹³ Mickey Borchert, comment on November 18, 2010, "Kate's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, comment posted at 7:24 am, Kate's Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

¹⁴ Angie Ash, comment on November 17, 2010, "Kate's Month at the Museum," comment on November 17, 2010 at 10:17 am, <http://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

than 2% of comments on Kevin's Facebook specifically expressed jealousy towards his experience at *MATM* more than 4.5% of comments published on Kate's Facebook did.¹⁵

From reading the blogs and social media comments, it is interesting that there is an absence of people leaving remarks about how they wish they could be famous like Kate or Kevin. No comments are found saying "I am so jealous that you got interviewed by CBS," for example, when Kevin talked about all the media attention he received. It is only fair to mention that there were a few comments expressing envy at Kevin meeting famous people, one fan named Katey wrote on Kevin's blog: "Not gonna [*sic*] lie, I'm kinda [*sic*] jealous you met Tom! LOL," when Kevin met with Tom Skilling of WGN Weather Center.¹⁶ However, ultimately comments such as these still express more interest in the experiences the roommate has rather than the fame that he or she received.

In fact, a majority of the posts expressing jealousy were written in reference to specific exhibits at MSI. For example when Kevin wrote about his chance to eat an organic meal by a famous chef, one Facebook user responds "jealous! I don't get to hang out with you until 2:30, long after breakfast with Chef Sarah Stegner."¹⁷

When Kate posted a picture of herself standing on top of the U-505 submarine, she

¹⁵ See Appendices E and F for more information

¹⁶ Katey, comment on "Sunny with a Chance of Learning, *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, comment posted November 14, 2011, <https://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/11/08/sunny-with-a-chance-of-learning-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

¹⁷ Dana Chen, "Kevin's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, comment on October 24, 2011 at 8:47 pm, <https://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

receives 2 comments from jealous visitors and later 3 more when she posted a picture of herself meeting astronaut Jim Lovell.¹⁸ Perhaps this is because visitors did not want to sound shallow by admitting attraction to the fame rather than the exhibits. On the other hand, perhaps social media opportunities attracted audiences that truly valued these exhibits and wanted to share in that appreciation.

So if not fame alone, what exactly are visitors so jealous of? A majority of these exhibits are on display every day to the public. Anyone can visit them without living inside the museum walls for a month. So what makes the concept so desirable? Apparently, the isolated setting is one of the major factors. Of course, it can be aggravating to have to wait to see your favorite exhibits, and you cannot always enjoy them the same way or take goofy pictures or stall at certain ones when there are crowds of people waiting on you. Some of the appeal to this exhibit opportunity may be in the idea of not having to share. The participants received special treatment because there was no one else around to compete with.

Perhaps Kevin himself said it best in a blog entry from October 24 2011 when he wrote about how thrilling it was to have the opportunity to experience the exhibits in seclusion:

¹⁸ Please note that this information was current as of October 24, 2012, the date that Kate's Month at the Museum Facebook page was accessed.

3 hours, all exhibits, all mine . . . and I LOVED, LOVED, LOVED it. Don't get me wrong, the museum has an energy when people are here, but this way I can take my time, focus and soak it all in. And I don't have to share with anyone. Hamster wheel: mine. Tennis ball launcher (showing a parabolic flight pattern): mine. Tornado: all 16 joysticks (to control the speed and shape): mine. Everything just for me. Seriously amazing.¹⁹

Certainly no one can blame Kevin for this excitement at enjoying the exhibits alone, but it is revealing that he felt a desire to brag about this seclusion with the museum to the world. The message also illustrates another of the main reasons why visitors today are so attracted to the idea of participating in *MATM*—because it truly is a unique experience that allows for a generation with tendencies of narcissism to get exactly what they want.

Entitlement among the Audience

Congruent with this idea, in *Generation Me*, Twenge also pointed out that there is a growing trend in which “many young people also display entitlement, a facet of narcissism that involves believing that you deserve and are entitled to more than others.”²⁰ She noted that a heavy influence is the educational and cultural environment that the generation grew up in, social milieu that encouraged the building of self-esteem and specialness above all else. Using an example that educators can relate to, she noted an observation by education professor Maureen

¹⁹ Kevin Byrne, “Police chiefs: I owe you one,” *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, <https://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/10/24/police-chiefs-i-owe-you-one-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

²⁰ Twenge, 70.

Stout that consequently students had begun “to believe that they are entitled to grades, respect, or anything else . . . just for asking.”²¹

The same trend can be traced in the analysis of comments found on the *MATM* social media sites. While comments expressing jealousy at the chance to live in the museum were quite frequent, there were some that implied an urgent, even indignant, tone. For example, Norwood B. posted “Kevin, Please [*sic*] get more pictures out there. You are living MY Dream!!”²² Another post on Kate’s Facebook page read, “Ok, just stop. I’m already so jealous it hurts.”²³ Another comment in response to Kevin’s post that he would report back tomorrow about his findings during the paranormal investigation at the museum displayed a similarly vexed tone: “OK -- it’s tomorrow - - [*sic*] I”m [*sic*] waiting.....LOL [*sic*].”²⁴ People feel entitled to have their demands met, and their social media comments wholeheartedly reflect that mindset.

Naturally, such assumptions are not without dire consequences in the community. “This is the trap of entitlement: it can be great to think that you are number one, but it is not so great living with or working with others who also think

²¹ Ibid., 71.

²² Norwood B., comment on “Behind the Scenes,” *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, comment posted on October 21, 2011, <https://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/10/20/behind-the-scenes/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

²³ Joshanna Robinson, comment on November 4, 2010, “Kate’s Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, comment posted on November 4, 2010 at 10:17 am, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

²⁴ Cheryl Rogers, comment on October 28, 2011, “Kevin’s Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, comment posted October 29, 2011 at 4:19 am, <https://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

they are number one,” Twenge remarked.²⁵ There was evidence of this friction among social media users on *MATM* Facebook pages. For example, on Kevin’s Facebook page he posted that anyone who found him and said the words “lunar module” would receive free admission passes to the museum. One user named Justin Griletz commented “Found you on Facebook....Lunar [*sic*] module,” suggesting that he should receive a free pass for the online interaction.²⁶ The next poster, Tonia Mowrer, then commented, “Justin stole my idea! Mail it to me!”²⁷ Her phrasing is a prime illustration of the entitlement ideology. Rather than accepting that multiple individuals may conceive the same idea, she exclaimed that he “stole” her idea and she therefore believed she should still be entitled to recognition for it, and perhaps even receive more credit for the inconvenience.

Twenge also mentions a tendency among the millennial generation to adopt what she refers to as victim mentality. “As a society we’ve created a new generation of young adults who blame everyone else for their failures,” says teacher Susan Peterman in explanation of this mentality.²⁸ Additional support of this idea can again be traced in the comments on the *MATM* blogs and social media sites. Consider a blog comment which read, “I cant say that I am not envoyous [*sic*] you

²⁵ Twenge and Campbell, 230.

²⁶ Justin Griletz, comment on October 27, 2011, “Kevin’s Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, comment posted on October 27, 2011 at 8:27 am, <https://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

²⁷ Tonia Mowner, comment on October 27, 2011, “Kevin’s Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, comment posted on October 27, 2011 at 9:52 am, <https://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2012).

²⁸ Twenge, 150.

when I am. about [sic] over 1000 people are jealous that you took thier [sic] spot. I personally think the musuem [sic] hates me for some reason but oh well.”²⁹ One of the most striking aspects of this comment is the author’s sentiment that the only explanation for not being chosen was because the museum felt resentment towards him or her personally. It certainly supports Twenge’s assertion that a “popular GenMe belief is to protect the self at all costs.”³⁰

Another characteristic of society resulting from the attitude of self-importance and feeling of entitlement is a tendency to be oblivious to the audience and surroundings. Although in many cases these examples could be circumstantial, they could also reflect this idea quite vividly such as a comment by Marla Brown on Kevin’s November 3, 2011 blog entry that said, “We love Chicago! But it looks like University of Chicago is coming in 4th for our daughter.” The entry fails to fully explain what the author meant. One can only assume that she is referencing a college choice for her daughter, but why should Kevin or the public care about that order? Is she maybe an acquaintance of Kevin’s and she is making a reference that outsiders will not understand without knowing them personally? It reflects a degree of self-absorption that individuals are guilty of holding. We do not necessarily care if what we say on social media pages is significant; we just want the

²⁹ Reid, comment on “Behind the Scenes,” *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, comment on October 21, 2011, <http://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/10/20/behind-the-scenes/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

³⁰ Twenge, 148.

opportunity to say whatever is on our minds. It is easy to forget when you are engaging in conversation on social media sites that everyone can and will read them.

In further example of this tendency, one should consider how many of the comments are worded around the individual commenter. For example, when Kevin posted that he was going to enjoy organic green eggs and ham the next day, one comment to the post read “What?! I hope you savor & document they [*sic*] experience... [*sic*] at least to just report back & share with me.”³¹ Notice the poster says “me” rather than “us,” even though any regular social media user is aware that other people are reading as well. This phrasing suggests the commenter believes herself to be special. Another example came in a comment towards the beginning of the *MATM* exhibit. “I’m gonna [*sic*] have the time of my life . . . last year it was a BLAST,” Wilma Maria Robles-Vega remarks.³² While this comment shows encouragement towards the *MATM* exhibits, it too is phrased in a way that reveals the self-involvement aspect of our society. The exhibit was available to anyone who visited MSI or wished to track the roommate’s experiences on Twitter or Facebook, yet a number of the publically displayed comments were phrased as if the commenters believed themselves to be the only ones following *MATM*, as if they were entitled to special recognition.

³¹ Wendy Stone Cotto, comment on October 24, 2011, “Kevin’s Month at the Museum” Facebook page, comment posted on October 24, 2011 at 7:44pm, <https://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed on November 9, 2012).

³² Wilma Maria Robles-Vega, comment on October 20, 2011, “Kevin’s Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, comment posted on October 20, 2011 at 3:28pm, <https://www.facebook.com/msikevin> (accessed November 9, 2011).

Narcissism among the MATM Roommates

In analyzing the content on the *MATM* twitter and Facebook pages, and even the blogs, the project appears to be primarily about the participant. To be fair the format of social media lends itself to this idea. But Kate and Kevin certainly had their share of allowing personal stories and thoughts to consume their online content.

Over 17% of Kate's Tweets, for example, fell into the "Other" category, meaning it was not in response to another tweeter, not an advertisement for an MSI exhibit or event or sponsor, including *MATM*, and not educational.³³ So if not included in any of those categories, what did that percentage entail exactly? Most of the "Other" category consisted of Kate's comments about her day that did not offer any educational or direct social value for the visitor but instead reflected her thoughts and emotions. "I am totally exhausted. Cat nap today is a must" is one example of a tweet from Nov 14, 2010.³⁴ On November 9 she tweeted "A little past 8AM and I've already spilled my coffee. Dear Tuesday, please don't punish me for being clumsy."³⁵ Comments such as these showed no relevance towards science, the museum, or its exhibits.

Sometimes the comments are indirectly relevant to the exhibit such as an October 21, 2010 tweet that read, "I was all set to explore late last night and my

³³ See Appendix A for more information

³⁴ Msikate [Kate McGroarty], comment on November 14, 2010, "MSIKate Twitter Page," <https://www.twitter.com/msikate> (accessed October 19, 2012).

³⁵ Msikate [Kate McGroarty], comment on November 9, 2010, "MSIKate Twitter Page," <https://www.twitter.com/msikate> (accessed October 19, 2012).

body said, “No, No, Miss Kate. You will sleep NOW!” My body is so smart sometimes.”³⁶ This comment was one of the more borderline tweets in the “Other” section because the primary purpose of the message does not appear to be to inform visitors of any MSI exhibits or events or her schedule at *MATM* but it inadvertently let her followers understand why there was an absence of videos and blogs about exhibits that day. Still, the primary motivation behind the comment appears to be to simply announce that Kate was going to sleep.

Kevin certainly had more tweets devoted to science and fun facts. According to my research, Kevin’s Twitter page had only 10% of its tweets fall into the “Other” category.³⁷ Meanwhile, Kate had 29% of her tweets involve MSI, *MATM*, or another MSI exhibit, and Kevin had more than 38% of his tweets in that category.³⁸ However, Kevin definitely used a lot of personal stories to illustrate how science is relevant or sometimes just to provide a heartfelt introduction. For example, in a blog entry Kevin writes, “Anyone who knows me knows I LOVE Halloween. When not living in a museum, I slave over my sewing machine for months before the big day. But this year was different. No sewing machine, no prep work and no going outside,” before talking about his experiences in MSI on Halloween day.³⁹ Although

³⁶ Msikate [Kate McGroarty], comment on October 21, 2010, “MSIKate Twitter Page,” <https://www.twitter.com/msikate> (accessed October 19, 2012).

³⁷ See Appendix B for more information

³⁸ See Appendices A and B for more information

³⁹ Kevin Byrne, “Halloween MSI-style (behind the scenes),” *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, <http://www.msichicago.org/matm/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/11/02/halloween-msi-style-behind-the-scenes-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

it is normal to include personal connections in these blog entries, and perhaps even expected given the nature of blogs, it is important to note that he still included a significant amount of personal content. Ultimately, *MATM* was arguably reflective of the generational narcissistic tendencies in both premise and execution.

The Role of Consumerism

Another observation to consider is that there was a noticeable drop in followers for *MATM2* after *MATM*. For the first installment of the *MATM*, Kate had over 1,085 followers on her Twitter page under the name “msikate.” A year later when the second installment of *MATM* occurred, Kevin’s Twitter page, “msikevin,” had only 390 followers.⁴⁰ There were similar results on Facebook. Kate’s Facebook page “Kate’s Month at the Museum,” received 3,608 likes while “Kevin’s Month at the Museum” received 2,344 likes according to their Facebook pages.⁴¹ According to my research, Kate’s page also saw 731 comments in response to her 101 posts and status updates, and Kevin’s page had 750 comments.⁴² While at first glance this may seem to favor Kevin, one should consider that Kevin created 205 posts, doubling the number that Kate created, and witnessed such a limited amount of feedback

⁴⁰ Please note that this information was current as of October 19, 2012, the date that both Kate and Kevin’s Month at the Museum Twitter pages content was accessed.

⁴¹ Please note that this information was current as of October 24, 2012, the date that Kate’s Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed and as of November 9, 2012 for Kevin’s Month at the Museum Facebook page.

⁴² See Appendices E and F for more information

comparatively.⁴³ Finally, MSIKate had 239 subscribers on YouTube because of her videos and also 61,117 video views. Despite posting more videos than MSIKate, KevinatMSI only gained 37 subscribers and 13,991 views on YouTube.⁴⁴ This research could indicate that the rarity of the *MATM* exhibit was an integral factor in its initial success. The repeat *MATM* witnessed dramatically different results among social media statistics.

Further evidence of that decline in visitor interest is detected among the museum roommates' individual posts. When examining the blog and social media comments of both Kate and Kevin, there are noticeable similarities in content with different results from the public. In light of this overlap, it is interesting that MSI chose to do a second installment of *MATM* at the same time of the year as the first. Between the same exhibits and repeated events such as the Annual Black Tie Columbian ball, the Christmas tree lighting ceremony, and the live viewing of an open-heart surgery, the roommates reported significantly comparable experiences. For example, on November 16, 2010, Kate's Facebook post read "Today's 'Guess this!' What might this be?" and featured a picture of a fulgurite.⁴⁵ The post received

⁴³ See Appendices E and F for more information. Please note also that these findings included the total number of comments analyzed plus the recorded number of deleted comments.

⁴⁴ Please note that I consulted YouTube for this research on December 18, 2012 at 10:42 am, so additional views or subscriptions after that date and time will not be included in that count.

⁴⁵ Msikate [Kate McGroarty], comment on November 16, 2010, "Kate's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, <http://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

26 comments within one day and also was awarded 4 “likes.”⁴⁶ On the *MATM2* Facebook page, Kevin posted a picture of the same object on November 8, 2011 and in two days it received only 3 comments.⁴⁷ Generally, Kate’s *MATM* Facebook page received a greater number of responses than Kevin’s page when it came to these repeat postings.

Perhaps the significant decline in visitor interest, according to the analysis of social media sites, can be tied to the idea of consumerism and its role in our society. As sociologists Joseph Valadez and Remi Clignet explain, the collective tendency to exhibit “cultural narcissism reflects the material conditions of social life, and, more specifically, those of post-industrial societies, where social status depends less on production than on consumption.”⁴⁸ And in the midst of a society driven by consumption there evolves an unremitting desire for new possessions and a subsequent tendency to grow tired of old objects and ideas more quickly. This concept explains the great decline of support on social media sites by the public from the first *MATM* installment to the second. *MATM* was innovative and fresh in the eyes of the public, but by the second *MATM* people were already familiar with it. The shock and awe factor had ultimately dissipated.

⁴⁶ Please note that this information was current as of October 24, 2012, the date that Kate’s Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed

⁴⁷ Please note that this information was current as of November 9, 2012, the date that Kevin’s Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed

⁴⁸ Joseph Valadez and Remi Clignet, “On the Ambiguities of a Sociological Analysis of the Culture of Narcissism,” *The Sociological Quarter*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Winter, 1987), 456.

Conclusion

When Americans saw humans such as Joice Heth and Ota Benga on display it reaffirmed their belief in racial and cultural superiority. At the heart of these exhibits was an attempt to validate societal viewpoints during a time of imperialism. They targeted individuals and other cultures to build up the value of their own. However, one cannot help but notice that the focus at the time was to encourage the superiority of a group of people, even an entire culture.

In contrast, today's culture features a compilation of individuals acting to build up their own personal self-worth first and foremost. There was an evident shift in the focus from external condemnation to internal glorification for individuals to achieve a feeling of superiority. While the end goal may be the same, the methods are significantly diverse.

As the research on the *MATM* social media sites suggest, individuals find substantial interest in how they can connect or benefit from a topic. This is evident through the interactions of the museum roommates as well as the casual social media users. So what can museum do to accommodate this trend? As we will see in the next chapter there is already a dramatic shift in authority among educational institutions, a result of the differing attitudes by the public in a postmodern age. The journey towards self-fulfillment by each individual should not be viewed so negatively but rather accepted and analyzed to a greater degree. Educators should perhaps recognize narcissism as a psychological need for the public instead. It is only natural that social media options and other methods of retaining visitor feedback should be explored in order to fulfill this need. And yet, as we will also see

in the following chapter, such efforts should be explored only within the boundaries of an institution's mission statement.

CHAPTER FOUR

New Authority, New Consequences

As technology develops, the freedom of the Internet can be both an asset and a danger to the community. In a 2011 article for the *Huffington Post*, Facebook Marketing Director Randi Zuckerberg called attention to one of the significant dangers of online sites, remarking, “I think people hide behind anonymity and they feel like they can say whatever they want behind closed doors.”¹ On the one hand, this anonymity is an appealing prospect, one that encourages people to express their opinions honestly since there are few consequences. On the other hand, however, it subsequently allows for dishonesty among individuals online. From the public perspective why not pretend to be someone else or say something radical, just for kicks? More often than not, there is no recognized power to stop them.

In light of these developments, shared authority has become somewhat of an expectation for society, and museum visitors are no exception. The public expects multiple perspectives, including their own, to receive equal recognition. Although many museum exhibits try to adhere to these new standards, it can also have detrimental effects on the public relationship with the museums, shifting the roles of the visitors, the museum, and the exhibit into obscurity.

¹ Bianca Bosker, “Facebook's Randi Zuckerberg: Anonymity Online 'Has To Go Away,’” *The Huffington Post*, Tech, July 27, 2011.

Postmodernity and Educational Institutions

Also reflective of the influence of postmodernity, the dissolution of traditional authority has affected educational institutions immensely. The public grew more aware that history, as they knew it, was too often defined by the figures in power. The riveting, winning tales of a battle and the lavish stories of the wealthy and elite compiled the accounts that historians and the general public wanted to read. However, when postmodern ideology emerged, suddenly there was greater concern in studying minorities, the working class, and accounts of the losing sides of war, in order to gain a better understanding of the past.

Postmodernist thought certainly led the public to challenge historians and educators in immeasurable ways. In his book *Generation X Goes to College*, Journalism professor Peter Sacks expressed annoyance with students at a community college for their attitudes about grading policies. As he recalled, one student even asserted, "I didn't get a very good grade on this, and it's frustrating because it's just your opinion."² While traditionally students used to accept the expertise of their teachers, they now use the postmodern logic to their benefit. Since every opinion matters and bias is existent everywhere, why should one perspective count more than another? Postmodernism reshaped the way that society perceives the validity of our educational system.

As a result, we witness a change in authority among educational institutions. As Twenge noted, the role of educators alone changed dramatically. "Lecturing is frowned upon; 'collaborative learning' is in," and "sometimes the teacher hardly

² Sacks, 122.

says anything,” she explains.³ Sacks also took note of his new role as a teacher. “They’d call me by my first name, simply a resource for students to facilitate their learning,” while educators and students became “partners in the learning process.”⁴ Teachers no longer held all of the authority in the classroom but rather they shared it with their students. Every participant became equal in the learning process and every opinion became just as significant.

Postmodernity and the Museum

For museums in particular a great realization emerged with the revolutionary art exhibit by Fred Wilson, *Mining the Museum*. This exhibit opened in 1992 at the Maryland Historical Society, and it quickly saw overwhelming support. In *Mining the Museum*, Wilson arranged contrasting items to display the existence of racism, whether intentional or inadvertent, in preceding museum exhibits. For example, one section of his exhibit featured a number of ornate wooden chairs, all positioned to face a slave whipping post. When asked about the reasoning behind its creation, Wilson explained “it’s the nature of these institutions to kind of control and cover . . . that’s the nature of power,” and he wanted to call attention to this.⁵ Ultimately, his exhibit created new expectations for museums by recognizing the limitations of historical authority.

³ Twenge, 29.

⁴ Sacks, 84.

⁵ Adair, Filene, and Koloski, 241.

Even comments from viewers on social media sites for the *MATM* exhibit reveal recognition towards ambiguity in museum authority. One illustration can be found in response to a post on Kate's Facebook page asking visitors to guess the museum object, a picture of a vile full of sand and a strand of hair. A social media user named Legerald Rice responded, "Everybody already knows it's supposed to be Abraham Lincoln's hair. But in reality, it could be anybody's, such as a homeless person from Lower Wacker drive circa 1985."⁶ Legerald questioned the legitimacy of the museum's collection item, pointing out that visitors would never truly know the difference between a random item and an object of genuine historical significance.

Examples of Visitor-Centric Exhibits

The resulting trend of shared authority reached museums as well. This is evident through an increasing display of exhibits that revolve around audience participation. Likewise, contest based exhibits became more common among museums. The Experience Music Project and Science Fiction Museum, for example, featured a contest similar to battle of the bands called *Sound Off!* The museum created this exhibit to engage audiences by asking visitors to vote for their favorite band and later featured the bands in their exhibits. *Sound Off!* represents the recent efforts by museums to incorporate visitors into exhibits even at the expense of their educational authority.

⁶ Legerald Rice, comment on November 12, 2010, "Kate's Month at the Museum" Facebook Page, comment posted November 12, 2010 at 6:59 am, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

Much like *Sound Off!*, the voter-based contest aspect was a substantially significant factor for the success of *MATM* as well. Without the audience participation feature, the museum roommate may not have witnessed such fame. If MSI itself instead chose someone for the role, many visitors and followers would have missed out on that connection to fame and lacked motivation to support the exhibit.

But besides voter-based exhibits, a number of exhibits relied on visitor participation for physical collections as well. At the Brooklyn Historical Society, for example, they encouraged visitors to submit their own artworks for display in one of the galleries, with a public appointed panel choosing the best pieces. In fact, as Nina Simon mentions, this is becoming more popular in the museum community. “One of the most frequent ways that cultural institutions invite people to share their own artworks, stories, and collections is through community galleries, in which individuals or community groups produce their own exhibitions,” she states.⁷

The *Human Library* serves as further illustration of shared authority in cultural institutions. Since these cooperating libraries use humans as their sources to be rented and teach new perspectives they recognize the existence of multiple authorities, specifically from the public. The *Human Library* epitomizes postmodernism in the education realm perhaps like no other. The organization and facilitation of human rentals are the sole responsibility of their workers. Meanwhile, the education aspect of deciding which topics will be explored and how

⁷ Simon, 295.

they should be discussed is left in the hands of the volunteers and the interested public.

Uncertainty of Purpose

One of the consequences of the demise of recognized authority for educational institutions such as museums is a lack of certainty about the purpose behind museums and exhibits. Amidst so many efforts to incorporate authority for everyone, to speak for multiple voices, the purpose frequently gets caught in the crossfires. It is often difficult to decipher the true educational purpose behind exhibits in the first place, despite purpose being one of the most basic and yet most significant aspects of museum exhibitions.

Searching for Purpose in Room With a Zoo

Room with a Zoo, the exhibit held by the Zoological Society of London, took place during the Whitsun May bank holiday weekend in May 2009. ZSL constructed a small exhibit for a human inhabitant, consisting of an armchair, a coffee table, a small bookshelf, and a coat rack. The ZSL website explained, "Room with a Zoo was a custom built enclosure, made entirely from sustainable wood and clear Perspex so that visitors had an unobstructed view of the inhabitant. Designed to resemble a human's natural habitat as closely as possible, the exhibit gave visitors the opportunity to learn more about the effect humans are having on the world around

them.”⁸ However, I would argue that this purpose was not made clear to the general audience.

One aspect to consider in determining the purpose is if it was created to encourage social interactions among the community. Perhaps this was the intent because for one weekend visitors could find a friendly and attainable zoo exhibit to interact with in ways that they could not always do with animals there. But the limited time span of the exhibit, a mere 3 days, suggests that it was not the case. In addition, there were only 47 tweets posted by the participant and only 10 of those were responses to other tweeters.⁹ This suggests that the purpose of the exhibit was probably not social alone. Furthermore, nowhere on the website or the twitter page does it list the name Paul Hutton, the man on display. Perhaps this signifies that he is truly meant to be just another animal on display at the zoo. Together, this information hints that this exhibit did little to encourage social interaction or build a relationship between ZSL and the visitors.

So, was this then purely a gimmick intended to take the world by storm? Perhaps publicity was the key purpose here. However, again the lack of social media interactions challenges this idea. If they intended to advertise the zoo through this exhibit, then, from an outsider’s perspective, they missed a number of opportunities. Paul Hutton could have easily taken pictures of the animals or even

⁸ ZSL London Zoo, “Humans on display at ZSL London Zoo,” Sunday May 24, 2009, Zoological Society of London, <http://www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/news/humans-on-display-at-zsl-london-zoo,588,NS.html> (accessed January 5, 2013).

⁹ Please note that this information was current as of October 14, 2012, the date that the Room with a Zoo Twitter page was accessed.

just created simple messages about them or any part of the zoo that he encountered. This could have encouraged visitor interest by discussing the interesting sights that he got to see during his time there.

So what about an educational value to the *Room with a Zoo* exhibit? Was it designed to be a social experiment? Does it inform the public of a specific issue or teach them anything? There was an opportunity in this exhibit to be educational, to capture an audience's attention, and to use the time to convey an educational message. Nonetheless, there is little evidence that this was done. Hutton tweeted his experiences, but a majority of his tweets were predictable and frankly uninspiring comments. Much like the *MATM* roommates, he tweeted messages such as "people are banging on my window."¹⁰ Some were more personal updates that are even less relevant to the outside world like "just enjoyed a nice ice cream – now basking in the summer sun" and "having problems with O2 on my iPhone. Internet stopped working- any ideas?"¹¹ In fact, there was only one tweet that seemed borderline educational, on May 24, 2009, when he commented, "Have just been told that humans are not omnivorous??? I am!"¹² If the intent of the ZSL exhibit was to have Paul interact with the visitors or teach about the animals featured at the zoo, it was not made clear, at least from an outsider's perspective.

¹⁰ Paul Hutton, "Room with a Zoo Twitter Page," posted May 24, 2009, <https://twitter.com/roomwithazoo> (accessed November 14, 2012).

¹¹ Paul Hutton, "Room with a Zoo Twitter Page," Posted May 23, 2009, <https://twitter.com/roomwithazoo> (accessed November 14, 2012).

¹² Paul Hutton, "Room with a Zoo Twitter Page," posted May 24, 2009, <https://twitter.com/roomwithazoo> (accessed November 14, 2012).

The listed purpose of *Room with a Zoo*, according to the ZSL website, is equally indistinguishable. “For this bank holiday weekend visitors to ZSL London Zoo will get to come face to face with a creature that has caused more devastation world wide than any other animal,” the page begins.¹³ This explanation is rather puzzling for someone who is just seeing the exhibit in pictures online. The room that Hutton stays in, for example, is small and not as intrusive as the message implies regarding humanity. They boast that the exhibit is “made entirely from sustainable wood,” and it has an exterior painted green, with limited objects inside the enclosure, and the grass is easily visible as the floor. While it is admirable to make such an environmentally conscience exhibit, it almost defeats the purpose of their message. They could have put in fake carpeting and entirely changed the look of the enclosure, shown litter scattered on the floor, or perhaps a television or radio to show noise pollution. They could have had the participant tweet about how he compares to the rest of the animals based on consumption habits or space.

Even the public seemed to pick up on the inaccurate depiction of mankind. On a discussion board on the *Democratic Underground*, a user named Sabriel commented, “That’s an awfully tidy example of the species . . . I wish I had one of those neat ones living with me.”¹⁴ Ultimately, the destructive nature of mankind was not accurately represented through the exhibit.

¹³ ZSL London Zoo, “One weekend only: see the world’s most destructive, dangerous and devious animal,” May 19, 2009, Zoological Society of London, <http://www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/news/one-weekend-only-see-the-worlds-most-destructive-dangerous-and-deviuous-animal,586,NS.html> (accessed January 5, 2013).

¹⁴ Sabriel, comment on “The Human Exhibit at the London Zoo – pics,” *Democratic Underground.com*, posted on May 21, 2009 at 8:53 pm,

Based on the tweets and pictures posted, it seems Hutton did little more than sit, relax, and play on his phone during this time. Again, however, this is only from an outsider's perspective of the exhibit based on social media and online sources about it. It is certainly plausible that a more established purpose was revealed at the physical space and is merely difficult to determine based on online tools alone. Nevertheless, this should be another consideration for the institution because it is risky to remain ambiguous about the purpose when often it is the online sites that the public may consult for a preliminary understanding about the exhibit.

Searching for Purpose in MATM

There was comparable ambiguity in the purpose of the *MATM* exhibits. In July 2010, MSI posted interest in finding an “adventurous, outgoing person with a strong interest in learning about science and the world around him or her” and also hinted that experience with online tools and writing would help an applicant.¹⁵ In their overview for *MATM 2*, MSI again requested a “good communicator” with “excellent writing skills” and noted that “experience with speaking in public, media interviews and blogging would be ideal,” as well.¹⁶ Much of the emphasis appears to

http://sync.democraticunderground.com/discuss/duboard.php?az=view_all&address=389x5699498 (accessed January 7, 2013).

¹⁵ “Roommate Wanted at MSI,” ABC 7 Chicago, Local News, July 20, 2010, <http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/local&id=7556746> (accessed January 7, 2013).

¹⁶ Museum of Science and Industry, “The Details,” <http://www.msichicago.org/MATM/details/> (accessed January 7, 2013).

be around the need for a roommate with communication skills, suggesting that the exhibit was designed to celebrate one person for the benefit of the public.

And yet after viewing public perception of the exhibit, the purpose was equally unclear. By the second installment even Kevin Byrne's blog entries revealed recognition of this uncertainty among public perceptions. After being asked by visitors why he wanted to live in the museum, he created a blog entry dedicated to defining the purpose of *MATM*. Articulating all the facets that museums ideally want advertised, Kevin writes:

The vision of MSI is "to inspire and motivate children to achieve their full potential in the fields of science, technology, engineering and medicine" . . . I don't think it's possible to leave without feeling inspired. The staff is enthusiastic and knowledgeable . . . They don't need me but I appreciate the opportunity to chip in in some small way . . . in all sincerity, this is more than a publicity stunt or a social experiment to me. It's about science, inspiring kids and contributing to MSI's vision. Science is cool and I intend to prove it.¹⁷

This statement suggests that there was either a personal or institutional realization that the purpose of *MATM* exhibit was unclear to visitors. Thus further explanation became necessary and Kevin was the ideal outlet.

One element of the exhibit that I found particularly troubling was that it seemed to blatantly emphasize marketing and neglect science. On the social media sites this was particularly evident. Between the 616 Tweets posted by the *MATM* roommates less than 30 contained educational content outside of advertising MSI

¹⁷ Kevin Byrne, "What Am I Doing Here?," *Month at the Museum 2 Blog*, <http://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/10/31/what-am-i-doing-here-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

exhibits.¹⁸ Meanwhile their combined Facebook posts contained less than 15 in the same category.¹⁹ The videos posted online also showed a limited supply of educational content. Out of 21 videos that MSI Kate posted on YouTube, only 5 contained primarily educational information through scientific explanations and experiments.²⁰ She also had opportunities during these videos to do more than show footage of the amazing exhibits but offer additional information that could engage her audience. In her video “SUB SLEEPOVER,” for example, Kate explored the U-505 submarine on video. This video had great potential for educational content, but she did little more than explain to her audience how small the rooms appeared. Kevin also posted 35 videos online but at least 9 of those featured science related information.²¹

As previously mentioned the *MATM 2* overview section posted on the MSI website, the only qualification they address is looking for an applicant “to live and breathe science 24/7 for 30 days.”²² Notice that is the only mention of science in the description for applicants while they devoted a paragraph to mapping out requirements with regard to an applicant’s communication skills. This emphasis suggests that they took a postmodern role to education in this exhibit, as they were

¹⁸ See Appendices A and B for more information

¹⁹ See Appendices C and D for more information

²⁰ For a complete list of videos by Kate please see “msikate channel,” <http://www.youtube.com/user/msikate> (accessed January 28, 2013).

²¹ For a complete list of videos by Kevin please see “kevinatmsi channel,” <http://www.youtube.com/user/kevinatmsi> (accessed January 28, 2013).

²² Museum of Science and Industry, “The Details,” <http://www.msi.chicago.org/MATM/details/> (accessed January 7, 2013).

looking for someone to learn about science with the visitors along the way rather than teach them outright.

The public even questioned the relevance of science to the *MATM* events on a few occasions. In a Facebook post that Kate wrote on October 29, 2010, she informed her social media followers “Tonight I went to my first Blackhawk’s game, rode a Zamboni, laughed with my best friend and was on the jumboTron.”²³ In response, Kate received 3 user comments inquiring about rules on leaving the museum as well as comment by Bill Blake asking, “what does a Blackhawk game have to do with science and industry?”²⁴ Kate replied with a remark that she planned on discussing the science behind hockey in an upcoming blog entry. Due to the absence of accessible blog entries from Kate, it is difficult to determine if and how she followed through on that plan.

In many ways *MATM* could be considered valuable because it promoted social interactions between visitors, social media users, and the museum. Many professionals such as Andrea Bandelli praise online collections and tools on websites for allowing visitors to “engage in a conversation much more easily, given the fact that all physical barriers disappear.”²⁵ And the blogging and social media inclusion was certainly a significant part of the *MATM* exhibits, as suggested by the

²³ Msikate [Kate McGroarty], comment on October 29, 2010, “Kate’s Month at the Museum” Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

²⁴ Bill Blake, comment on October 29, 2010, “Kate’s Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, comment posted October 30, 2010 at 11:14 am, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

²⁵ Andrea Bandelli, “Virtual Spaces and Museums,” *Museums in a Digital Age*, (London: Routledge, 2010), 151.

emphasis on communication skills as a major qualification for the museum roommate. In this way the exhibit could arguably help inspire individuals' interests in science and technology through further discussion with one another, assuming the content is, in fact, relevant.

My research on Kate and Kevin's social media use during the *MATM* exhibits also suggests success in encouraging social interaction between visitors and museum roommates. In fact, nearly 50% of Kate's tweets contained responses to other Twitter users, and Kevin's Twitter page had 36% of its content devoted to responses and shout outs towards other Twitter users as well.²⁶ Meanwhile, on Facebook *MATM* saw 1,447 comments between the two installations and received 4,305 "likes" on these pages.²⁷ Together the two museum roommates also gained 1,475 followers on Twitter.²⁸ This research supports the concept of a social value to the *MATM* exhibits because it encouraged interactions among thousands of visitors.

A Brief Look at Public Perception of Purpose in MATM

There is also a large degree of marketing value to the *MATM* exhibits. As discussed previously in chapter 2, the marketing appeal contributes substantially to MSI and its benefactors. Based on the attention that the roommates gave to marketing, it is no surprise that many followers perceive *MATM* as a marketing and

²⁶ See Appendices A and B for more information

²⁷ See Appendices C and D for more information

²⁸ See Appendices A and B for more information

publicity tool first and foremost. Consider Nina Simon's interpretation of the exhibit:

My bigger struggle is based on a misunderstanding I had about what Month at the Museum is fundamentally about. When the project started, I thought it was about science. I had this mental picture of someone coming in and initiating unorthodox projects, testing hypotheses, and generally playing with science in a way that science centers don't typically engage.

But that's not what happened. Month at the Museum was a creative marketing project, not a scientific endeavor. The storyline of the experience was simple: girl comes to museum and is transformed by science.²⁹

Another blogger and museum professional named Coleen Dilenschneider agreed that "most of Kate's videos are more of a video diary in which the audience is removed from the experience," and likewise advocated that MSI should have been "making it more about people and learning and less about Kate."³⁰ Some museum professionals saw the exhibit more as a gimmick than a learning opportunity for the public.

A number of responses on these blog posts reveal that the authors are not alone in assuming that the value in *MATM* was predominantly marketing based rather than educational. "I'm not sure why this whole Month at the Museum circus bugs me so much, other than it's [*sic*] seems like an Internet-fueled perfect storm of

²⁹ Nina Simon, "Month at the Museum, Part 2: Marketing, not Science," *Museum 2.0*, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2010/11/month-at-museum-part-2-marketing-not.html> (accessed January 7, 2013).

³⁰ Colleen Dilenschneider, "MSI's Month at the Museum: Marketing Vs. Mission, *Know Your Own Bone*, <http://colleendilen.com/2010/11/29/msis-month-at-the-museum-marketing-vs-mission/> (accessed January 7, 2013).

surface over substance,” one commenter writes in response on Nina Simon’s blog.³¹ Another remarks, “I can’t agree more that while A Month at the Museum generated great press coverage and hundreds of followers on Twitter & Facebook, there is question as to whether or not this project is aligned with the MIS [*sic*] mission and goals.”³² A number of comments on these blogs expressed a similar sentiment that the perceived purpose of the exhibit was not quite harmonious with MSI’s mission statement.

And many visitors were particularly unenthusiastic about Kate’s coverage of her experiences during *MATM*. “I personally felt that the content of Kate’s shared experience was underwhelming and lacked real insight into what makes science, at its core, unpredictable and perhaps even slightly dangerous (dare I say, she took the sexiness out of science?),” a student commented on Simon’s blog.³³ “Kate may have been transformed, but I don’t think the audience/readers/followers were,” another follower wrote, and “It was all broadcast, not conversation. I never felt like Kate ‘talked back’ to MSI or represented the audience in anyway, never took advantage of

³¹ Paul Orselli, comment on “Month at the Museum, Part 1: A Video Contest that Delivers,” *Museum 2.0*, comment posted 2 years ago, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2010/10/month-at-museum-part-1-video-contest.html> (accessed January 7, 2013).

³² Brittany Piehl, comment on “Month at the Museum, Part 2: Marketing, not Science,” *Museum 2.0*, comment posted 2 years ago, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2010/11/month-at-museum-part-2-marketing-not.html> (accessed January 7, 2013).

³³ Elisabeth Murray, comment on “Month at the Museum, Part 2: Marketing, not Science,” *Museum 2.0*, comment posted 2 years ago, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2010/11/month-at-museum-part-2-marketing-not.html> (accessed January 7, 2013).

her audience via the project to facilitate conversation(s) [*sic*].”³⁴ Ultimately many visitors and followers not only failed to see an educational value but even social value to the exhibit. To the public eye, in many ways, *MATM* fell short of their expectations. Perhaps that is why there was such a dramatic decline in visitor response on the social media sites from *MATM* to *MATM 2*.

And from this research there is evidence that the public remained uncertain of their role in the Month at the Museum exhibits as well. “As long as you don’t mind daytime tours through ‘your’ Smart House, I vote ‘yes’ for your moving in!” Denise Horske commented, perhaps jokingly referencing the mindset that the museum roommate owns the exhibits and the visitors’ concerns are only secondary.³⁵ Also on Kate’s Facebook page one follower wrote, “Thanks for allowing us to tag along on this amazing journey.”³⁶ Although this was probably intended as a nice gesture of appreciation towards Kate, it is phrased in an interesting way. Why did the commenter feel that they were a tag-along rather than a legitimate visitor? After all, shouldn’t the purpose of *MATM* be to include a wider audience in these once-in-a-lifetime experiences that the museum roommates have? If that were not the intention, then why would they even make the *MATM* such a big, public spectacle?

³⁴ Chris Lawrence, comment on “Month at the Museum, Part 2: Marketing, not Science,” *Museum 2.0*, comment posted 2 years ago, <http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2010/11/month-at-museum-part-2-marketing-not.html> (accessed January 7, 2013).

³⁵ Denise Horske, comment on November 2, 2010, “Kate’s Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, comment on November 3, 2010 at 2:37 pm, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

³⁶ Dee O’Neill, comment on November 17, 2010, “Kate’s Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, comment posted on November 17, 2010 at 5:01 pm, <https://www.facebook.com/msikate> (accessed October 24, 2012).

For further example that not all visitors took the *MATM* exhibits seriously consider again the creator of the Fake Month at the Museum YouTube series, Kyle Thiessen, who outright the exhibit. One of his Facebook comments read, “here’s yesterday’s installment, which went up late last night! And [*sic*] don’t forget to check out friday’s [*sic*] installment, which went up on sunday! [*sic*] confusing! [*sic*],” blatantly poking fun at the lack of organization among Kate and Kevin’s social media postings.³⁷ Another example from Fake Month at the Museum is in response to Kevin’s blog entry in “Thank You & See You Later.” Kevin wrote “I just wanted to take a quick moment to thank you all for your enthusiasm, encouragement, comments and suggestions. This has truly been an amazing experience and I owe it, in part, to your involvement.”³⁸ On the Facebook page for Fake Month at the Museum, Thiessen mimics this unfortunate phrasing when he posts, “Thanks to everyone for coming out to Fake Month at the Museum LIVE! It was a great event - in part (but only in part) because of YOU.”³⁹ Through jokes such as these, Thiessen reveals that he did not take the *MATM* exhibits as seriously.

Through his YouTube videos, as briefly mentioned before, Thiessen further pokes fun at the Month at the Museum exhibit by questioning the purpose

³⁷ Fake Month at the Museum, comment on November 15, 2011, “Fake Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/FakeMonthAtTheMuseum> (accessed January 7, 2013).

³⁸ Kevin Byrne, “Thank You & See You Later,” *MATM2* Blog, November 17, 2011, <http://www.msichicago.org/MATM/kevins-month-at-the-museum/blog-post/2011/11/17/thank-you-see-you-later-1/> (accessed October 22, 2012).

³⁹ Fake Month at the Museum, comment on February 23, 2012, “Fake Month at the Museum” Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/FakeMonthAtTheMuseum> (accessed January 2, 2013).

specifically. In the fake submission video he reads off a paper the pretend ad for the contest: “Win the opportunity to be whisked away and confined inside a museum for up to one month, earning your freedom through copious blogging.”⁴⁰ He treats *MATM* like a joke, delivering snarky quips at it through various fake online postings and meanwhile calling into question the purpose of the unorthodox exhibit.

One cannot help but notice the difference between the public perception and the institutional perception of the purpose of their exhibits. Although not discreet about its marketing purposes, MSI ultimately tried to sell *MATM* as an exhibit to promote science. Consider the slogans for each installment, “Month at the Museum: Eat, Sleep, Science,” and “Month at the Museum 2: Science Never Sleeps.” There is certainly an emphasis on the science aspect in the titles, yet the public clearly did not always perceive the science relevance in the exhibits. This is particularly dangerous for museums, as they need to offer educational meaning.

Inappropriate Content

Another ramification of shared authority in museum exhibits is that oftentimes offensive or inappropriate content may emerge from the public when the opportunity arises. When there is no recognized authority to address these issues, it can be devastating to the exhibit and the museum involved. Simon addresses the problem in the case of online collections and websites, noting possible remedies such as offering participants the chance to “flag” inappropriate content and get the

⁴⁰ FakeMonthAtTheMuseum, “Fake Month at the Museum Submission Video,” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lm_XTG1bAUE (accessed November 19, 2012).

visitors involved or even color code the text on a website to distinguish the speaker as a museum staff versus a visitor in order to avoid confusion.⁴¹

Meanwhile, many museums may choose not to do anything at all. For example, in a conversation between Bill Adair and Deborah Schwartz regarding a community-led exhibit displayed by the Brooklyn Historical Society, the topic of controversial material on display is briefly discussed but ultimately quickly written off as irrelevant because of the nature of their exhibit.⁴² Perhaps there was a need for more specific studies about offensive content by visitors as a consequence of highly participatory museum opportunities, specifically online.

The *MATM* exhibits experienced inappropriate content as well, the research indicates. 9 comments on Kate's Facebook page were deleted, and 25 comments from Kevin's Facebook page were deleted as well.⁴³ On YouTube one user left a particularly negative comment on a video of Kate, stating, "She really gets on my nerves! What a waste of a pick! Sorry [*sic*] but true!"⁴⁴ One cannot help but notice that by the second installment of *MATM* MSI changed its procedure and disabled the comment feature on Kevin's YouTube videos. This highlights another ramification of heightened authority opportunities for the public. On many occasions it only

⁴¹ Simon, 223.

⁴² Deborah Schwartz and Bill Adair, "Community as Curator: A Case Study at the Brooklyn Historical Society," in *Letting Go? Sharing Historical Authority in a User-Generated World*, ed. Bill Adair, Benjamin Filene, and Laura Koloski, (Philadelphia: The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, 2011), 116.

⁴³ See Appendices E and F for more information

⁴⁴ DISHMAC, comment on "SUB SLEEPOVER!" YouTube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frdudvQRtr0> (accessed January 5, 2013).

encourages inappropriate or negative content that disaffirms the intent of the exhibits and detracts from its purpose.

Conclusion

As educational institutions it is natural for museums to adjust to a new generation of authority. How can absolute purpose for exhibits be found when all educational content is continuously being questioned? Should they give up and focus more on entertainment instead? Should museums be filled with celebrities and gimmicks in the same manner that theme parks do?

Although it is important to recognize, respect, and even incorporate the perspectives of the public, we cannot rely on their actions alone. Educational institutions risk compromising their integrity if they sit idly by and allow the public voices to launch at one another without interjection. And trying to accommodate all perspectives at the expense of purpose is equally deplorable. Museums need to create exhibits with a discernible purpose if they want to be taken seriously in a postmodern age. Although social media and online resources should be used to accommodate visitor needs, they, along with other tools of entertainment, should not be exploited to such an extent that it hinders the public understanding of an exhibit's purpose.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

After years on display, Ota Benga wanted nothing more than return to his home in the Congo. Unfortunately, World War I prevented his return. Meanwhile, society expected him to dress, speak, and act like an American citizen. He was expected to adapt to the lifestyle of the same public that had once tormented him at the zoo. Unable to do so, in 1916 Benga went out into a secluded area of a forest, removed the caps off of his teeth, and shot himself in the heart.¹

At the close of their time on display, Kate and Kevin completed more interviews and received continued publicity. They returned to their homes with \$10,000 and, one can only imagine, a collection of stories to share with their family and friends. Both expressed eagerness in returning to the museum someday. Kate commented, "I really like to think of this as the start of a really great relationship with MSI, and the beginning of how much I am going to get out of this museum for the rest of my life."²

While imperialism was the driving force behind early exhibits of humans on display, postmodernism became the inspiration behind modern exhibits. The two

¹ The caps on his teeth were placed earlier to make him appear less frightening to the public, and became a symbol of his confinement in American society in many ways

² MSI Podcast #13 Month at the Museum- Kate McGroarty," Museum of Science and Industry, http://www.msichicago.org/fileadmin/Activities/Podcast/MSI-013_MATM-KateMcGroarty.mp3 (accessed November 18, 2012).

time periods held strikingly diverse attitudes at their roots, as the fates of the humans on display can attest to. Societal perceptions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century suggest that public display of humans was reserved for oddities—the unknown, deformed, and unfamiliar. However, modern exhibits featuring live humans have instead displayed the common man and welcomed them as celebrities rather than freak shows.

How Much Does Postmodernism Really Change Things?

Consider again the example that Peter Sacks gave of how his students reacted to his grading comments. They challenged the legitimacy of a grade on the premise that their own opinions are just as feasible as their teachers. However, if this were truly their belief, then the students would not be in those classrooms in the first place. Even if students cannot admit it, their presence alone recognizes legitimate value to educational institutions. Even students who boldly claim that they know more than their professors and simply attend college to help them advance in the workplace are, at the very least, still accepting a societal recognition that these educational institutions have something valuable to offer.

So, how much does postmodernism truly change? We now recognize that there are no absolutes and we find it acceptable to question the legitimacy of any research. And yet that in itself is nothing new. The case of Joice Heth, the woman who P.T. Barnum advertised as a slave who nursed George Washington, and the need for a public autopsy prove that even over a hundred years ago the public still held doubts about those who called themselves the authority.

Perhaps the only thing that changed is the frequency of people challenging traditional educational authority. In many ways there is not so much a loss of authority for educational institutions as much as there is a noticeable shift from educators with *authority* to educators with *experience*. The name may have changed, but the supreme value remains.

What Does This Research Conclude?

This research offers insight into how the public, or at least the online community, perceives modern exhibits with humans on display. It consulted a wide range of online resources that I feel have often gone unnoticed in the research process. Social media sites became a valuable asset to this study, particularly Facebook and Twitter. Personal blogs, websites, and even YouTube videos provided substantial content for obtaining a better understanding of the public view as well. Furthermore, news articles revealed larger societal perceptions towards these exhibits. When infused together, this research explores the major social values that contributed to the creation and support of museum displays featuring humans.

Fame appears to be an extensive factor in encouraging the development of these exhibits. At first glance, the most obvious beneficiary of these displays would be the human participants themselves. Along with an experience of a lifetime, these lucky individuals received national recognition, not to mention the ultimate resume booster. But upon further consideration their fame is only temporary, or in Paul Hutton's case barely existent to begin with. Meanwhile, the educational institutions will find longer recognition for hosting these exhibits. MSI in particular will find

continued publicity from the *MATM* roommates' advertisements for the museum's other collections. The businesses, organizations, and people promoted through the *MATM* social media pages also benefited tremendously.

But fame was a factor that proved just as significant in the execution of these exhibits as in the conception. Visitors and followers wanted to find a connection with the museum celebrity, with fame. They took advantage of the opportunity to meet them in person at the museum or the facility itself. But they also played a part by voting in the exhibits that had that opportunity available, and interacting through relevant social media sites. The content of those visitor comments on social media pages also further illustrated a societal obsession with fame.

Coinciding somewhat with that concept, the second significant social value that contributed to the success of exhibits such as *MATM* was a pervading interest in self-recognition. This section of my study relied on comments from social media sites, both from the participants and online followers, more than any other. It calls attention to a surprising find: The same society with motivations dominated by fame and wealth is equally enthralled with the mundane, monotonous practices of everyday life as long as it is something they can relate to personally.

This idea became evident through visitor interactions in particular. A major trend among visitors on social media sites was to talk about themselves, to advertise themselves, and to share with others online how they related to the content personally. This was not exclusive to the visitors, however. Our major human display figures Kate McGroarty and Kevin Byrne certainly exhibited their fair share of social media content that sacrificed relevance for personal amusement. This

research reflected a few unflattering societal trends such as entitlement, consumerism, and even narcissism. However, I argued that with a greater understanding of such tendencies among individuals, museums can gain a better idea of visitor needs.

While two preceding chapters contemplated recognition as a psychological need for museums to respect, chapter four warned of the dangers of recognizing too many versions of authority. This is a particularly difficult concept, especially considering the major social value in shared authority and the postmodern ideology that inspired it. But ultimately too many exhibits are leaning too far towards a focus on entertainment rather than education.

Uncertainty of purpose is a major problem arising from postmodernism and too much shared authority as well. In our efforts to recognize and represent multiple voices, we have cut back on educational purposes behind exhibits. It seems the only way to speak for everyone is to step back and let them speak. However, when we neglect our experienced professionals, we risk missing valuable educational opportunities. Therefore, I advocate for a balance between the two. Perhaps we should use more social media and have other options to promote social interactions between visitors but keep the exhibit content itself relevant to a specific purpose that fits within the institution's mission statement.

What Does This Mean for Museums Today?

So how should museums maintain relevance in a postmodern world? I agree with curator Howard N. Fox in his article "The Right to Be Wrong:" "A healthy

curiosity is in order. Contemporary curators, like scientists and contemporary artists, should not resist experimentation,” he encourages.³ There is certainly some truth to this idea. Museums can still create exhibits that express a certain perspective or idea as long as they recognize and respect that it is not the only one. There is still a need for these perspectives because we will never find a “right” way without stumbling along through the “wrong” ways first.

We should be aware of the dangers to abandoning faith in the experience of educational institutions, and we should likewise support the museum’s “right to be wrong” when it comes to exhibits rather than risking a loss of purpose and identity. Ultimately, I concur with author Mike Wallace, who wrote: “I applaud efforts to demystify and democratize museums by sharing authority with communities, involving them in planning, collecting and evaluating . . . I part company, however, with those who propose that curators deprofessionalize themselves and transfer power to ‘the community’.”⁴ It is certainly a delicate balance, and there is still great value in exploring the thoughts and opinions of the public as well as the professionals.

As the emphasis on self-recognition indicates, authority for the public was certainly an additional factor in the success of exhibits such as *MATM*. People appreciated the opportunity to contribute and be a part of the unique museum

³ Howard N. Fox, “The Right to be Wrong,” in *Collecting the New: Museums and Contemporary Art*, ed. Bruce Altshuler, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2005), 27.

⁴ Mike Wallace, “Changing Media, Changing Messages,” in *Museum, Media, Message*, ed. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, (London: Routledge Press, 1995), 122.

experiment. However, it is also significant to realize that too much authority can become a double-edged sword. It too often creates confusion for the public to understand the role of the museum, the exhibits, and even themselves.

More than anything, we need to remember that the public's perceptions of exhibit purpose may not be the same as the museum's intended purpose. This was made clear to us in the case of *MATM* when the public began to question the relevance of the exhibit as well as their very role in it. I believe that this is substantial proof that museums need to take the purpose of exhibits as seriously as the mission statement for better effectiveness.

I encourage museums to embrace social media, marketing techniques, and entertainment strategies only as far as their mission statements allow. If we give in and let every museum become a miniature Disneyland, then we only reaffirm the loss of recognition in our experience, which could result in a downhill spiral. The public is naturally who museums work for, and their opinion are exceedingly valuable. Without them there would be no museum. But like all good things, there needs to be a balance—between education and entertainment—to remain loyal to institutional purpose. Museums should use visitor perspectives to complement or strengthen their exhibits rather than replace them.

Furthermore, museums should not have to give up their unique perspective and create exhibits with as much neutrality as possible for the sake of appeasing everyone, for that is another slippery slope. As we have learned from research about visitor interest in self-recognition and the concept that every opinion is equally valuable, our society is full of unique, diverse, and opinionated individuals.

If we spend our time trying to create a voice to speak to every one, then we will inevitably stand in silence forever.

How Should This Affect Museum Research?

Museums can cater to visitor needs easier if we strive to understand the public as much as possible. It may be prudent to study multiple disciplines in order to strengthen our understanding of the visitor. This concept is nothing new; in fact, a 1985 publication entitled “To Realize Our Museum’s Full Potential,” addressed the need for more diversity within museum studies literature. In the article Joan Madden suggests, “In addition to becoming familiar with the literature on planning and evaluation of effective exhibits, educators should be familiar with scholarly writings in behavioral and educational psychology.”⁵ I agree that a greater emphasis should be placed on visitor behavioral studies if museums want to remain relevant.

Finally, I must assert how imperative it is to pursue further study of visitor opinions online. Online blogs, websites, and social media pages can be an exceptionally valuable asset to the museum community if we are willing to invest our time and work into it. While online anonymity is often a great danger in our culture it can also be a significant asset. Visitors may become more willing to offer honest opinions and provide valuable criticism when given the opportunity to remark anonymously. In the end I believe the benefits outweigh the risks. For it is

⁵ Joan Madden, “To Realize Our Museum’s Full Potential,” *The Journal of Museum Education*, Vol 10, No. 4 (Fall, 1985), 4.

only after we place the visitors on display that we can discover how successful an exhibit truly is.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Table A.1. Analysis of Kate’s Month at the Museum Twitter Page Content*

Date	# Tweets	Tweets Advertising MATM or MSI exhibit	Tweets Advertising Bus., Org., or Person	Science or Fact Related	Responses to other Tweets	Other
Nov. 18	5	3	0	0	1	1
Nov. 17	7	2	0	0	4	1
Nov. 16	8	3	0	0	3	2
Nov. 15	4	3	0	0	1	0
Nov. 14	9	2	0	0	4	3
Nov. 13	9	4	0	0	3	2
Nov. 12	8	3	0	0	4	1
Nov. 11	6	3	0	0	2	1
Nov. 10	11	4	0	0	7	0
Nov. 9	9	1	0	0	6	2
Nov. 8	5	3	0	0	1	1
Nov. 7	4	0	0	0	1	3
Nov. 6	9	2	0	0	4	3
Nov. 5	21	2	0	2	16	1
Nov. 4	6	0	0	1	3	2
Nov. 3	4	2	0	0	1	1
Nov. 2	13	3	0	0	8	2
Nov. 1	13	3	0	0	8	2
Oct. 31	4	3	0	0	0	1
Oct. 30	8	4	0	0	3	1
Oct. 29	6	3	0	1	0	2
Oct. 28	11	3	0	0	8	0
Oct. 27	12	2	0	0	7	3
Oct. 26	21	2	0	0	15	4
Oct. 25	12	7	0	0	3	2
Oct. 24	13	3	0	0	8	2
Oct. 23	12	5	1	2	3	1
Oct. 22	22	9	0	1	12	0
Oct. 21	18	4	0	1	11	1
Oct. 20	4	0	0	0	2	2

* Please note that this information was current as of October 24, 2012, the date that Kate’s Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed

Table A-1 Continued

Date	# Tweets	Tweets Advertising <i>MATM</i> or MSI exhibit	Tweets Advertising Bus., Org., or Person	Science or Fact Related	Responses to other Tweets	Other
Oct. 19	1	0	0	0	0	1
Oct. 18	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 17	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 16	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 15	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 13	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 12	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 11	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 10	1	0	0	0	0	1
Oct. 9	1	0	0	0	0	1
Oct. 8	1	0	0	0	0	1
Oct. 7	2	0	0	0	0	2
Total	300	88	1	8	149	53
%		29.33%	0.33%	2.67%	49.67%	17.67%

APPENDIX B

Table B.1. Analysis of Kevin's Month at the Museum Twitter Page Content*

Date	# Tweets	Tweets Advertising MATM or MSI exhibit	Tweets Advertising Bus., Org., or Person	Science or Fact Related	Responses to other Tweets	Other
Nov. 17	6	4	0	0	0	2
Nov. 16	10	1	0	1	6	2
Nov. 15	5	4	0	0	1	0
Nov. 14	6	4	2	0	0	0
Nov. 13	12	6	0	0	5	1
Nov. 12	11	2	0	0	6	3
Nov. 11	5	5	0	0	0	0
Nov. 10	10	4	3	0	2	1
Nov. 9	9	4	2	0	2	1
Nov. 8	5	2	2	1	0	0
Nov. 7	8	4	1	0	3	0
Nov. 6	10	5	0	0	5	0
Nov. 5	12	3	1	2	6	0
Nov. 4	8	5	1	0	2	0
Nov. 3	11	5	2	1	3	0
Nov. 2	12	3	3	2	3	1
Nov. 1	2	2	0	0	0	0
Oct. 31	10	3	0	1	5	1
Oct. 30	4	3	0	0	0	1
Oct. 29	8	1	0	1	5	1
Oct. 28	6	2	1	1	1	1
Oct. 27	12	3	0	2	6	1
Oct. 26	48	25	7	4	12	0
Oct. 25	10	3	0	0	6	1
Oct. 24	8	2	2	2	1	1
Oct. 23	7	3	0	1	3	0
Oct. 22	17	9	0	1	6	1
Oct. 21	7	2	0	0	4	1
Oct. 20	7	0	1	0	4	2
Oct. 19	4	1	0	0	3	0

* Please note that this information was current as of November 9, 2012, the date that Kevin's Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed

Table B.1 Continued

Date	# Tweets	Tweets Advertising <i>MATM</i> or MSI exhibit	Tweets Advertising Bus., Org., or Person	Science or Fact Related	Responses to other Tweets	Other
Oct. 18	3	0	0	0	1	2
Oct. 17	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 16	1	0	0	0	0	1
Oct. 15	4	0	0	0	4	0
Oct. 14	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 13	3	1	0	0	1	1
Oct. 12	0	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 11	2	0	0	0	2	0
Oct. 10	3	0	0	0	3	0
Oct. 9	2	1	0	0	0	1
Oct. 8	2	0	0	1	1	0
Oct. 7	2	0	0	0	2	2
Oct. 6	1	0	0	0	0	1
Oct. 5	3	1	0	0	0	2
Total	316	123	28	21	114	32
%		38.92%	8.86%	6.65%	36.08%	10.13%

APPENDIX C

Table C.1. Analysis of Kate's Month at the Museum Facebook Page Content*

Date	# Comments	Advertise MATM or MSI exhibit	Advertise outside bus., org. or person	Science or Fact Related	Other
Nov. 18	5	5	0	0	0
Nov. 17	3	2	0	0	1
Nov. 16	3	2	0	1	0
Nov. 15	6	5	0	0	1
Nov. 14	3	3	0	0	0
Nov. 13	2	2	0	0	0
Nov. 12	6	6	0	0	0
Nov. 11	4	4	0	0	0
Nov. 10	3	3	0	0	0
Nov. 9	4	3	0	0	1
Nov. 8	2	1	0	0	1
Nov. 7	2	1	0	0	1
Nov. 6	2	1	0	0	1
Nov. 5	3	2	0	0	1
Nov. 4	5	1	1	1	2
Nov. 3	2	1	1	0	0
Nov. 2	4	2	0	0	2
Nov. 1	2	2	0	0	0
Oct. 31	3	1	1	0	1
Oct. 30	2	2	0	0	0
Oct. 29	2	1	0	0	1
Oct. 28	6	6	0	0	0
Oct. 27	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 26	4	3	0	0	1
Oct. 25	2	2	0	0	0
Oct. 24	2	1	0	0	1
Oct. 23	4	2	1	0	1
Oct. 22	5	5	0	0	0
Oct. 21	4	3	0	0	1
Oct. 20	3	1	0	0	2
Oct. 19	1	0	0	0	1

* Please note that this information was current as of October 24, 2012, the date that Kate's Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed

Table C.1 Continued

Date	# Comments	Advertise <i>MATM</i> or MSI exhibit	Advertise outside bus., org. or person	Science or Fact Related	Other
Oct. 18	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 17	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 16	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 15	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 14	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 13	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 12	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 11	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 10	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 9	1	0	0	0	1
Oct. 8	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 7	1	0	0	0	1
Total	101	73	4	2	22
%		72.28%	3.96%	1.98%	21.78%

APPENDIX D

Table D.1. Analysis of Kevin's Month at the Museum Facebook Page Content*

Date	# Comments	Advertise <i>MATM</i> or MSI exhibit	Advertise outside business/ org. or person	Science or Fact Related	Other
Nov. 18	1	1	0	0	0
Nov. 17	8	6	0	0	2
Nov. 16	6	4	0	1	1
Nov. 15	8	8	0	0	0
Nov. 14	7	5	2	0	0
Nov. 13	8	7	0	0	1
Nov. 12	7	6	0	0	1
Nov. 11	6	6	0	0	0
Nov. 10	7	5	1	0	1
Nov. 9	11	5	4	0	2
Nov. 8	5	3	2	0	0
Nov. 7	6	4	2	0	0
Nov. 6	7	7	0	0	0
Nov. 5	6	3	1	2	0
Nov. 4	9	6	2	1	0
Nov. 3	7	6	1	0	0
Nov. 2	8	4	1	2	1
Nov. 1	4	4	0	0	0
Oct. 31	6	4	0	1	1
Oct. 30	9	8	0	0	1
Oct. 29	4	3	0	0	1
Oct. 28	5	4	1	0	0
Oct. 27	6	4	0	1	1
Oct. 26	6	6	0	0	0
Oct. 25	8	5	3	0	0
Oct. 24	8	6	1	1	0
Oct. 23	5	5	0	0	0
Oct. 22	11	9	1	0	1
Oct. 21	3	2	0	1	0
Oct. 20	2	1	1	0	0

* Please note that this information was current as of November 9, 2012, the date that Kevin's Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed

Table D.1 Continued

Date	# Comments	Advertise <i>MATM</i> or MSI exhibit	Advertise outside business/ org. or person	Science or Fact Related	Other
Oct. 19	1	1	0	0	0
Oct. 18	2	0	0	0	2
Oct. 17	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 16	1	0	0	0	1
Oct. 15	2	0	0	0	2
Oct. 14	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 13	1	0	0	0	1
Oct. 12	2	1	0	0	1
Oct. 11	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 10	1	0	0	0	1
Oct. 9	1	0	0	0	1
Oct. 8	3	0	0	1	2
Oct. 7	0	0	0	0	0
Oct. 6	2	0	0	1	1
Oct. 5	1	0	0	0	1
Total	211	149	23	12	27
%		70.62%	10.90%	5.69%	12.80%

APPENDIX E

Table E.1. Analysis of Visitor Comments on Kate’s Month at the Museum Facebook Page*

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	Encouragement	Questions /Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
1	7-Oct-10	Text only	19	5	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
2	9-Oct-10	Text only	27	11	4	1	5	1	5	0	0
3	19-Oct-10	Text only	38	8	6	1	4	0	1	0	0
4	20-Oct-10	Text only	65	20	14	3	5	0	2	0	0
5	20-Oct-10	Text only	38	12	7	4	4	3	1	0	0
6	20-Oct-10	Link to video	28	13	5	3	6	2	0	4	0
7	21-Oct-10	Link to video	16	4	3	0	1	1	0	0	0
8	21-Oct-10	Text only	31	14	0	7	4	5	2	0	0
9	21-Oct-10	Link to blog	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	22-Oct-10	Link to blog	3	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
11	21-Oct-10	Link to blog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12	22-Oct-10	Text only	33	10	0	4	3	4	1	1	0
13	22-Oct-10	Link to blog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	22-Oct-10	Link to video	17	8	1	1	2	5	0	3	0
15	22-Oct-10	Link to blog	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
16	23-Oct-10	Text only	42	9	3	2	0	0	3	0	1
17	23-Oct-10	Link to blog	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
18	23-Oct-10	Link to blog	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* Please note that this information was current as of October 24, 2012, the date that Kate’s Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed

Table E.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	Encourage-ment	Questions /Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
19	23-Oct-10	Text only	27	9	6	4	0	0	0	0	0
20	24-Oct-10	Picture Album	103	34	16	8	10	14	1	0	0
21	24-Oct-10	Text only	20	28	3	17	6	4	5	0	1
22	25-Oct-10	Picture Post	17	9	8	0	2	0	1	0	0
23	25-Oct-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
24	26-Oct-10	Picture post	30	4	1	0	3	1	0	0	0
25	26-Oct-10	Picture post	21	9	3	2	4	0	0	1	0
26	26-Oct-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
27	26-Oct-10	Text only	24	2	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
28	28-Oct-10	Text only	25	11	1	2	1	9	0	0	1
29	28-Oct-10	Text only	23	16	1	5	3	9	1	0	0
30	28-Oct-10	Picture post	9	13	3	0	4	4	1	2	1
31	28-Oct-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
32	28-Oct-10	Link to video	17	9	0	3	3	6	0	0	0
33	28-Oct-10	Text only	31	7	2	2	1	3	0	0	0
34	29-Oct-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35	29-Oct-10	Text only	29	13	2	6	0	2	3	0	0
36	30-Oct-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
37	30-Oct-10	Picture post	12	4	0	1	0	2	1	0	1
38	31-Oct-10	Text only	33	15	4	2	3	0	5	0	0
39	31-Oct-10	Text only	30	3	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
40	31-Oct-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table E.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	Encourage-ment	Questions /Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
41	1-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
42	1-Nov-10	Photo post	10	8	0	0	2	8	0	0	0
43	2-Nov-10	Text only	36	10	1	4	4	4	0	0	0
44	2-Nov-10	Photo post	16	10	8	1	1	0	0	0	1
45	2-Nov-10	Text only	32	6	3	1	0	0	2	0	0
46	2-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
47	3-Nov-10	Photo post	7	7	2	1	0	3	1	1	0
48	3-Nov-10	Photo post	15	10	8	1	0	0	1	3	0
49	4-Nov-10	Text only	27	9	0	2	2	0	5	1	0
50	4-Nov-10	Text only	42	6	2	1	0	3	0	0	1
51	4-Nov-10	Link to video	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
52	4-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
53	4-Nov-10	Photo post	14	7	1	1	1	0	4	0	0
54	5-Nov-10	Photo post	11	7	1	1	4	3	0	0	0
55	5-Nov-10	Text only	28	4	0	0	3	0	1	0	0
56	5-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
57	6-Nov-10	Text only	28	6	0	1	5	0	0	0	0
58	6-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
59	7-Nov-10	Text only	43	7	0	5	1	0	0	0	0
60	7-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
61	8-Nov-10	Text only	27	8	1	5	3	0	0	1	0
62	8-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table E.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	Encourage-ment	Questions /Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
63	9-Nov-10	Link to video	11	6	5	0	1	1	0	0	0
64	9-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
65	9-Nov-10	Photo post	13	11	10	2	3	0	1	0	0
66	9-Nov-10	Text only	27	5	0	2	0	4	0	0	0
67	10-Nov-10	Photo post	2	34	1	1	1	32	0	0	2
68	10-Nov-10	Text only	28	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
69	10-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
70	11-Nov-10	Photo post	9	42	0	1	1	42	0	0	0
71	11-Nov-10	Text only	43	8	2	1	4	4	0	4	0
72	11-Nov-10	Text only	29	6	2	1	2	2	1	3	0
73	11-Nov-10	Photo post	9	5	1	1	3	4	0	1	0
74	12-Nov-10	Photo post	3	24	0	4	0	24	0	0	0
75	12-Nov-10	Link to video	12	10	1	1	5	9	0	3	0
76	12-Nov-10	Link to video	5	3	1	1	2	0	1	0	0
77	12-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
78	12-Nov-10	Link to video	6	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0
79	12-Nov-10	Link to video	6	6	2	2	1	4	0	0	0
80	13-Nov-10	Link to video	5	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0
81	13-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
82	14-Nov-10	Text only	29	2	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
83	14-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
84	14-Nov-10	Photo post	13	5	1	0	0	5	0	0	0
85	15-Nov-10	Text only	27	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
86	15-Nov-10	Link to video	7	5	0	1	0	5	0	0	0

Table E.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	Encourage-ment	Questions /Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
87	15-Nov-10	Link to video	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
88	15-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
89	15-Nov-10	Photo post	18	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
90	15-Nov-10	Photo post	6	2	1	0	2	0	0	1	0
91	16-Nov-10	Photo post	4	26	0	0	1	26	0	0	0
92	16-Nov-10	Photo post	16	13	0	7	1	9	1	0	0
93	16-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
94	17-Nov-10	Text only	20	22	13	3	2	1	5	2	0
95	17-Nov-10	Add photos to album	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
96	17-Nov-10	Photo post	19	11	7	3	3	1	1	0	0
97	18-Nov-10	Photo post	22	7	6	1	2	0	0	1	0
98	18-Nov-10	Photo post	15	4	4	1	1	0	0	0	0
99	18-Nov-10	Text only	41	10	4	1	2	4	0	0	0
100	18-Nov-10	Text only	53	18	17	1	3	0	0	0	0
101	18-Nov-10	Link to video	51	17	17	0	3	0	0	0	0
Total			1713	722	222	144	150	279	62	33	9
%					30.75%	19.94%	20.78%	38.64%	8.59%	4.57%	1.25%

APPENDIX F

Table F.1. Analysis of Visitor Comments on Kevin’s Month at the Museum Facebook Page*

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
1	5-Oct-11	Text only	25	9	1	7	0	5	1	0	0	1
2	6-Oct-11	Text only	21	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
3	6-Oct-11	Text only	28	6	0	6	0	2	0	0	0	0
4	8-Oct-11	Text only	33	5	0	3	0	0	0	2	0	0
5	8-Oct-11	Text only	11	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	0
6	8-Oct-11	Text only	21	8	0	6	1	0	0	1	0	0
7	9-Oct-11	Text only	21	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
8	10-Oct-11	Text only	29	12	0	2	5	2	1	2	1	1
9	12-Oct-11	Text only	43	5	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0
10	12-Oct-11	Text only	25	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
11	13-Oct-11	Text only	40	5	0	1	1	2	0	1	1	0
12	15-Oct-11	Text only	48	9	0	1	0	6	0	3	1	0
13	15-Oct-11	Text only	38	7	0	6	0	1	0	0	0	1
14	16-Oct-11	Text only	10	14	0	0	12	1	1	1	0	0
15	18-Oct-11	Text only	45	3	1	2	0	1	0	0	1	0
16	18-Oct-11	Text only	36	10	1	5	1	3	0	3	0	1

* Please note that this information was current as of November 9, 2012, the date that Kevin’s Month at the Museum Facebook content was accessed

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
17	19-Oct-11	Text only	61	12	0	2	6	6	3	0	0	0
18	20-Oct-11	Text only	44	6	0	3	0	5	0	0	0	0
19	20-Oct-11	Picture post	34	5	0	0	1	2	0	0	1	2
20	21-Oct-11	Text Only	18	17	1	0	0	3	16	0	0	1
21	21-Oct-11	Link to blog	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22	21-Oct-11	Picture post	9	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
23	22-Oct-11	Picture post	6	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
24	22-Oct-11	Text only	39	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	22-Oct-11	Picture post	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
26	22-Oct-11	Picture post	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
27	22-Oct-11	Link to video	10	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
28	22-Oct-11	Link to video	11	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
29	22-Oct-11	Link to blog	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
30	22-Oct-11	Photo post	3	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
31	22-Oct-11	Text only	48	8	0	0	3	0	1	4	0	1
32	22-Oct-11	Text only	15	7	0	3	1	5	1	0	0	0
33	22-Oct-11	Photo post	7	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1
34	23-Oct-11	Photo post	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
35	23-Oct-11	Link to video	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
36	23-Oct-11	Link to video	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
37	23-Oct-11	Picture post	13	4	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0
38	23-Oct-11	Link to video	9	3	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0
39	24-Oct-11	Text only	16	4	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	0
40	24-Oct-11	Link to blog	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
41	24-Oct-11	Photo post	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
42	24-Oct-11	Photo post	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
43	24-Oct-11	Text only	3	8	0	0	0	3	8	0	0	0
44	24-Oct-11	Text only	20	7	0	0	4	3	0	1	0	0
45	24-Oct-11	Photo post	4	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
46	24-Oct-11	Add photos to album	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
47	25-Oct-11	Text only	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
48	25-Oct-11	Link to blog	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
49	25-Oct-11	Photo post	11	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
50	25-Oct-11	Photo post	27	7	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	0
51	25-Oct-11	Photo post	16	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
52	25-Oct-11	Photo post	8	7	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	0
53	25-Oct-11	Text only	13	5	0	0	3	3	3	0	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
54	25-Oct-11	Photo post	11	3	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0
55	26-Oct-11	Text only	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
56	26-Oct-11	Text only	17	20	0	0	1	3	18	0	0	2
57	26-Oct-11	Link to video	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
58	26-Oct-11	Text only	14	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	0
59	26-Oct-11	Link to blog	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
60	26-Oct-11	Photo post	21	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1
61	27-Oct-11	Link to blog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
62	27-Oct-11	Text only	11	5	0	0	0	3	0	2	0	0
63	27-Oct-11	Link to video	3	3	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	1
64	27-Oct-11	Text only	10	25	0	0	0	7	0	23	0	1
65	27-Oct-11	Text only	41	9	0	0	3	2	6	0	0	1
66	27-Oct-11	Text only	16	14	0	4	3	6	0	0	0	0
67	28-Oct-11	Photo post	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
68	28-Oct-11	Link to blog	0	3	0	2	0	2	1	0	0	0
69	28-Oct-11	Text only	19	9	0	0	2	5	4	0	2	1
70	28-Oct-11	Text only	19	3	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	0
71	28-Oct-11	Photo post	4	3	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
72	29-Oct-11	Photo post	8	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
73	29-Oct-11	Photo post	0	4	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0
74	29-Oct-11	Photo post	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
75	29-Oct-11	Text only	71	17	0	6	5	5	0	3	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
76	30-Oct-11	Photo post Link to	16	4	0	1	0	0	0	4	0	0
77	30-Oct-11	video	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
78	30-Oct-11	Photo post	9	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
79	30-Oct-11	Photo post	10	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
80	30-Oct-11	Text only Link to	12	8	0	0	2	3	1	2	0	1
81	30-Oct-11	blog	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
82	30-Oct-11	Photo post Link to	17	6	0	2	2	2	2	1	0	0
83	30-Oct-11	video Link to	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
84	30-Oct-11	video Link to	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
85	31-Oct-11	video	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
86	31-Oct-11	Text only	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
87	31-Oct-11	Photo post	7	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
88	31-Oct-11	Photo post	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
89	31-Oct-11	Photo post Link to	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
90	31-Oct-11	blog	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
91	1-Nov-11	Photo post	37	17	1	1	3	11	15	0	2	1
92	1-Nov-11	Photo post	3	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
93	1-Nov-11	Text only	20	10	0	1	0	9	9	0	0	0
94	1-Nov-11	Photo post	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
95	2-Nov-11	Text only	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
96	2-Nov-11	Text only	8	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
97	2-Nov-11	Link to blog	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
98	2-Nov-11	Link to blog	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
99	2-Nov-11	Photo post	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
100	2-Nov-11	Text only	1	19	0	0	0	1	18	0	0	1
101	2-Nov-11	Text only	19	3	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
102	2-Nov-11	Text only	48	14	1	5	1	5	3	2	0	0
103	3-Nov-11	Text only	15	4	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	1
104	3-Nov-11	Photo post	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
105	3-Nov-11	Link to blog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
106	3-Nov-11	Link to video	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
107	3-Nov-11	Link to video	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0
108	3-Nov-11	Link to video	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
109	3-Nov-11	Text only	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
110	4-Nov-11	Text only	10	6	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	0
111	4-Nov-11	Link to blog	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
112	4-Nov-11	Link to video	12	4	0	1	0	2	0	1	0	0
113	4-Nov-11	Text only	3	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	0
114	4-Nov-11	Photo post	9	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
115	4-Nov-11	Text only	10	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
116	4-Nov-11	Photo post	10	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
117	4-Nov-11	Photo post	22	8	0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
118	4-Nov-11	Photo post	11	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
119	5-Nov-11	Text only	9	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
120	5-Nov-11	Link to blog	3	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0
121	5-Nov-11	Text only	12	4	0	0	0	2	4	0	0	0
122	5-Nov-11	Photo post	4	3	0	0	0	2	3	0	0	0
123	5-Nov-11	Text only	15	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
124	5-Nov-11	Link to video	11	2	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
125	6-Nov-11	Text only	8	6	0	0	6	0	6	0	0	0
126	6-Nov-11	Link to blog	7	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
127	6-Nov-11	Text only	5	5	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	0
128	6-Nov-11	Photo post	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
129	6-Nov-11	Link to video	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
130	6-Nov-11	Photo post	16	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
131	6-Nov-11	Link to video	9	5	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	0
132	7-Nov-11	Link to blog	4	3	0	2	0	2	0	1	0	0
133	7-Nov-11	Text only	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
134	7-Nov-11	Photo post	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
135	7-Nov-11	Photo post	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
136	7-Nov-11	Photo post	4	5	0	1	1	2	0	3	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
137	7-Nov-11	Link to video	4	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0
138	8-Nov-11	Photo post	9	3	0	0	2	2	3	0	0	0
139	8-Nov-11	Photo post	8	2	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0
140	8-Nov-11	Text only	21	5	0	0	1	2	1	2	0	0
141	8-Nov-11	Link to blog	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
142	8-Nov-11	Photo post	0	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
143	9-Nov-11	Text only	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
144	9-Nov-11	Text only	28	10	3	2	1	1	0	6	0	0
145	9-Nov-11	Text only	14	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0
146	9-Nov-11	Photo post	9	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
147	9-Nov-11	Link to blog	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
148	9-Nov-11	Text only	2	13	0	0	12	0	13	0	0	0
149	9-Nov-11	Photo post	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
150	9-Nov-11	Link to video	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
151	9-Nov-11	Link to video	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
152	9-Nov-11	Photo post	10	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
153	9-Nov-11	Photo post	22	8	0	0	1	3	6	1	0	1
154	10-Nov-11	Link to video	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
155	10-Nov-11	Photo post	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
156	10-Nov-11	Text only	1	8	0	0	8	1	6	0	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
157	10-Nov-11	Link to video	8	5	0	2	0	2	3	0	0	0
158	10-Nov-11	Photo post	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
159	10-Nov-11	Link to blog	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
160	10-Nov-11	Text only	26	2	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0
161	11-Nov-11	Link to video	4	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
162	11-Nov-11	Link to blog	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
163	11-Nov-11	Photo post	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
164	11-Nov-11	Link to video	6	6	0	0	1	3	6	0	0	0
165	11-Nov-11	Photo post	22	3	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	0
166	11-Nov-11	Photo post	21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
167	12-Nov-11	Text only	7	3	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
168	12-Nov-11	Link to blog	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
169	12-Nov-11	Photo post	7	4	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	1
170	12-Nov-11	Photo post	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
171	12-Nov-11	Photo post	18	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
172	12-Nov-11	Link to video	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
173	12-Nov-11	Link to video	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
174	13-Nov-11	Photo post	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
175	13-Nov-11	Text only	1	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
176	13-Nov-11	Photo post	32	2	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	0
177	13-Nov-11	Link to video	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
178	13-Nov-11	Link to video	12	2	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0
179	13-Nov-11	Photo post	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
180	13-Nov-11	Text only	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
181	13-Nov-11	Link to video	11	6	0	4	0	1	0	2	0	0
182	14-Nov-11	Photo post	5	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
183	14-Nov-11	Link to blog	5	4	0	1	0	4	1	0	0	0
184	14-Nov-11	Link to blog	8	5	0	0	1	2	4	0	0	0
185	14-Nov-11	Photo post	28	6	0	1	0	4	6	0	0	0
186	14-Nov-11	Photo post	23	5	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	0
187	14-Nov-11	Link to video	10	4	0	3	2	1	0	0	0	0
188	14-Nov-11	Text only	5	3	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0
189	15-Nov-11	Photo post	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
190	15-Nov-11	Photo post	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
191	15-Nov-11	Link to blog	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
192	15-Nov-11	Link to video	6	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
193	15-Nov-11	Link to video	10	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0

Table F.1 Continued

No.	Day Posted	Type of Post	# Likes	# Comments	# Shares	Encouragement	Questions or Advice	Share Personal Info.	Response to an Exhibit, Event or Educational Information	Other	# Comments that Express Jealousy	# Comments Missing
194	15-Nov-11	Link to video	12	3	0	0	0	2	3	3	0	0
195	15-Nov-11	Text only	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
196	15-Nov-11	Photo post	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
197	16-Nov-11	Text only	10	2	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
198	16-Nov-11	Photo post	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
199	16-Nov-11	Text only	4	3	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
200	16-Nov-11	Text only	14	9	0	9	0	1	0	0	0	0
201	16-Nov-11	Link to video	9	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
202	16-Nov-11	Photo post	3	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
203	17-Nov-11	Photo post	22	3	0	1	0	1	2	0	0	0
204	17-Nov-11	Link to blog	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
205	17-Nov-11	Text only	21	10	0	9	2	1	0	1	0	0
206	17-Nov-11	Text only	9	4	0	4	0	3	0	0	0	0
207	17-Nov-11	Link to blog	13	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
208	17-Nov-11	Link to video	10	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
209	17-Nov-11	Text only	120	36	0	33	1	7	0	0	0	0
210	17-Nov-11	Photo post	14	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
211	18-Nov-11	Text only	10	2	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Total			2592	725	11	164	124	228	277	110	13	25
%						22.62%	17.10%	31.45%	38.21%	15.17%	1.79%	3.45%

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